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THE ANCIENT CHURCH AND MODERN
INDIA.

The
ANCIENT CHURCH
& MODERN INDIA

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FOR REFERENCE

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FOREWORD.

I HAIL this book with joy, and warmly commend it to others. It has long been a favourite idea with me that one of the chief aids to a real reading of ancient Christian history is to be found in the analogies afforded by the modern Mission field. Particularly is this true of lands like India and China, where age-long civilizations preoccupy the minds of men and determine the way in which they think and feel about the Christian Gospel when it appears in their midst. And most of all is it true of India, where various forms and strata of civilization and thought coexist side by side in the great "complex" called Hinduism, let alone the immigrant elements within the total life of India, Parseeism and Islam. These have indeed found a settled place in Indian society, yet as special communities or human *enclaves*, rather than as leavening elements in Hinduism, the native system of society south of the Himalayas.

The parallels, then, between India, especially as part of the British Empire or Commonwealth of peoples, and the Roman Empire, particularly its Oriental half—East of Italy—considered as spheres for the Gospel of Christ in which to develop its inherent vital energies both as seed and as leaven, are many, striking, and often essential. As such,

these parallels are light-bringing examples and no mere curious cases, interesting to the learned, but of little or no real meaning and practical value. On the contrary they are of profound human significance and guidance to right thinking and practice, both in relation to the historic Past and to the Present, which is history in the making. This holds good for Christians in Western lands, who have need to understand the true historic meaning of the immemorial traditions which mould their lives, too often as mere tradition and custom, in order that they may grasp and use them as spirit rather than as letter. But it applies still more to Christians in India, both missionaries and Indians, and to non-Christians too, who are wishful to apprehend aright what is going on under their eyes, as the mind of Christ works once more, as seed and leaven, in a soil and in a mass of humanity hitherto untouched by its distinctive and historic forms of appeal. As it there works, by selective affinity and repulsion, the actual soul of man again reveals itself, as it did in Tertullian's day in North Africa, as partly Christian and partly non-Christian, the former at its deeper and more essential levels, the latter nearer the surface, where the inherited, local, and accidental elements in human life hold sway. So was it during the great and long-drawn conflict of Christianity and its religious and moral rivals in the Roman Empire: so is it to-day to the eye of the instructed and sympathetic observer both of Christianity and of its organized rivals in India. And in this book we have, reflected in a mirror of singular sympathy

and sincerity, something of the impression which familiarity alike with the great missionary stage of ancient Christianity and with Christianity to-day as a missionary religion in India naturally produces on a thoughtful mind.

The result seems to me of high value for Indians, for whom it was primarily written, being in fact the substance of the sort of teaching the writer is wont to give to Indian theological students in the United Theological College at Bangalore. It is, I am sure, a picture highly instructive and suggestive to English men and women, particularly for those who have any thought of serving Christ in India, whether directly or indirectly, by personal service there or by support at the home base.

Some parts of the ground here covered in brief but clear outline have been dealt with more fully elsewhere, notably by Dr. J. N. Farquhar* as regards the realm of religious thought, while one large and important practical aspect of the immense field has been studied more at large by Mr. Phillips himself in *The Outcastes' Hope* (published by the United Council for Missionary Education). But I am not aware of any other book which sets out to do what this little series of essays (for such it really is) attempts, and in my opinion achieves in the main, namely, to present in broad but essentially just outline and perspective the characteristic genius of the Christian Gospel of Life Divine in the human soul, both individually and socially. Accordingly, I feel it a deep satisfaction to be allowed to commend it to the

* *The Crown of Hinduism ; Modern Religious Movements in India.*

attention of the youth, in particular, both of India and of English-speaking lands, as a picture loyal in intention to truth as such, wherever found, competent in its knowledge of the essential facts, gracious in spirit to all men and their cherished convictions, and therefore entitled to be read with respect and attention as the best thing of its kind at present within reach anywhere. It is largely a pioneer effort. May it have not only many readers, but also imitators, who, working in like spirit, may add to and supplement it in that wherein it is, and inevitably must be, inadequate.

VERNON BARTLET.

PREFACE.

THIS little book does not aim at telling the whole story of the ancient Christian Church. Some day that whole story ought to be told from the point of view of Christians in India. For undoubtedly in India, as in all other countries, the whole experience of the past can be made to enrich the life of the present. Meanwhile until such Church history for India can be written we have for our use the great Church Histories written by scholars in Europe and America. Here we try to garner a few sheaves, to state a few of the most conspicuous lessons which Christians in India to-day can learn from the experience of the Ancient Church. We write only as much history as is necessary to make clear its application to modern India. This book makes no original contribution to the story of the past, except in so far as it shows that story in some measure repeating itself in the present. Several large fields of ancient Church history it leaves entirely untouched, because it aims simply at indicating in a small compass as much practical guidance as it can on some of the weightiest problems confronting the Church of Christ in India in the present generation. Inevitably it touches here and there matters of present controversy, because all the

weightiest problems are in some measure controversial, but it is not written in the interests of any particular section of the Christian Church.

A plant is infinitely more complex than its seed, though latent in that seed there was all the potentiality of the roots and leaves and blossoms that were to come. Primitive Christianity was a seed, sown into a particular soil, and from that seed combining with that soil have grown many things which in early days could not have been foreseen. The value of Church history lies herein, that by it we can so trace the whole development as to see both what was true growth out of the ancient seed and what was incongruous and unnatural fungus or parasite. If someone showed you a poisonous fruit on a mango tree you might be unable to tell whether the fruit was a true mango or not, but if you have watched mangoes grow, and have studied the origin of their different varieties, if you know which kind of soil fosters their best growth and which will turn them into something dangerous to life, then you need not be afraid. So in modern Church life there are customs and institutions which, like a good mango tree, are true developments from the ancient seed, and others like the poisonous mango, false and perverted developments. It is by the right kind of study of Church history that we can see where the wrong kind of sap entered in and development went astray. So we can know which things in our modern religious organizations cry out for reform and which deserve our fullest support. We need to be able to value with discrimination and sympathy the

various complex elements which go to make up modern Church life. Christianity in India and Ceylon is not going to be an exact reproduction of Christianity in England or America or Rome. It will inevitably develop new forms of life differing in important ways from those of the western world. How shall we feel safe when these new forms give rise to problems which our experience in the present day gives us no materials for deciding? The answer is that probably the materials are all stored away in the history of the past. History has a wonderful way of repeating itself; always with fresh minor features. Some of the forces which powerfully acted upon the Church in ancient Alexandria or Antioch or Rome are present to-day in Colombo, Madras, and innumerable Indian villages. In Alexandria in the early Christian centuries the Church was in close contact with men whose system of thought and life bears a wonderfully close resemblance to our Vedantism. In Antioch there were schools like the modern Unitarians or the Brahmo-Samaj. Consequently the problems which are raised by everyday work in missions and Churches are often by no means new, and light can be thrown on them by the study of Church developments in the past.

In short, the Church has in the past had to buy its experience at great price, and we shall pay that price over again by the repetition of ancient mistakes if we do not reflect upon the lessons treasured up for us in the story of the Church's beginnings.

In the preparation of this book help has been drawn from many sources, of which it seems

unnecessary to make detailed acknowledgment. But readers who are familiar with Dr. T. R. Glover's *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, and the late Professor Gwatkin's *Early Church History*, will notice the special debt to those most valuable books. Dr. J. V. Bartlet has given much encouragement, made most valuable suggestions, read the manuscript, and contributed an introduction, for all of which I am most grateful. The book would not have been written at all but for my wife, who persuaded me to get it done in the intervals of travel on furlough, did all the mechanical part of the work herself, and shared in other parts of the work besides. We desire to offer it, in reverence and with a due sense of its shortcomings, to the great Church of Christ in India, among whose devoted servants we seek to find a place.

G. E. PHILLIPS.

London,
August, 1920.

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The Ancient Church and Modern India

CHAPTER I.

THE WORLD AROUND THE CHURCH, THEN AND NOW.

I. *Ancient Roman and Modern British Administration.*

IN the earliest days of our era the Romans were under the impression that they ruled the world. "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed" (Luke ii. 1). With regard to the world which they knew the impression was approximately true, for our great Eastern lands were so far away as to be almost forgotten. The Roman Empire included everything between the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, the Atlantic, and the Northern edge of the African Desert. Cohorts of Roman soldiers could be met everywhere, far down by the cataracts of the Nile, or marching through the savage island of Great Britain. We have no reliable information as to the population of that great empire, but experts have made estimates varying between eighty and a hundred millions. So in attempting the evangelization

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of India, Christianity has undertaken a numerically much larger task than it faced when St. Paul set out to win the Roman Empire.

The peoples forming the Roman Empire were of very different nationalities, languages, and customs, but were all held together by one strong central government, with one system of administration. Wherever the Roman Empire went it laid down good roads, some of which have been maintained and are as good to-day as when they were first made. It became comparatively easy and safe to travel. An inscription on a Phrygian merchant's grave shows that he had made the journey between Phrygia and Rome seventy-two times. Commercial enterprises linked country with country. News spread fast, and literature in the shape of manuscripts copied by skilled slaves was widely circulated. The result of all this was that that part of humanity which lay around the Mediterranean Sea became remarkably mingled and unified. The same process was going on which to-day is being repeated on a larger scale throughout the whole world, the process of drawing the ends of the earth closer together and making intercourse between the different sections of humanity far more frequent and effective in its influence upon common life. Men began to feel themselves to be citizens not only of their own city or country but of the whole world. Rome not only provided what was on the whole the best government which the world had hitherto seen, but she finally (early in the third century) extended the privileges of her citizenship to all the countries which

she conquered. The result was manifest in the growth of a larger patriotism which made the Gaul, the Spaniard, the Syrian, proud to call himself "Roman."

It is clear that for India in the present century the British Government has performed the same sort of function as Rome performed in the first two centuries of our era for the peoples around the Mediterranean Sea. India's many peoples, speaking one hundred and twenty-seven distinct languages, now feel themselves to be unquestionably one. Roads, commerce, methods of administration, and unity of official language, under an administration which, whatever criticisms may justly be levelled at its detailed acts, aims in general at justice and progress, all these things have opened up marvellous possibilities for the unified India of to-day. A religion whose ideals captured the imagination and won the whole-hearted allegiance of any considerable part of Indian society to-day would in a very short time permeate the whole life of the new India which is coming into being.

2. Ancient Greek and modern Western culture.

In the days of St. Paul Rome was the world's ruler; yet if you had walked any day even into Rome itself, as you passed a group of aristocratic young gentlemen laughing together in the Forum, you would have heard the Greek language. That was a symptom of the next great general influence pervading the world. The Greeks had failed to build up a Greek nation, but had succeeded in imposing

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on the whole educated world their ideas, their beliefs, and their language. The best poems, the best statues, the best philosophies, all were Greek, and everyone knew it and tried to imitate them. One thing that helped in this process was that Greeks, like modern Scotchmen, were to be found everywhere. After Alexander's conquests opened up the East and Roman rule settled the West, Greeks scattered everywhere as artists, as merchants, and as teachers of philosophy. It says much for their intellectual power that the whole educated world began to talk their language. In the book of the Acts we see St. Paul preaching throughout most of the Roman Empire, but never faced with the modern missionary's task of learning a new language. Wherever he went he preached in Greek and was well understood. Only once, in the Lycaonian Hills (Acts xiv. 11), did a difference of language cause him any difficulty. The official language of Government and the Courts was Latin; but the one common language of the Empire was Greek.

A modern European missionary spends years in learning a language like Tamil, and then is dumb in the villages a hundred miles north of Madras. He has one consolation—he can speak in English to audiences in any city throughout India. When English spreads throughout the villages, as it has already done in the cities, we shall have a good parallel to the spread of Greek in the first century.

There is one fact here well worth noting. It was only during the centuries when Christianity was spreading over the whole Empire that Greek was in

universal use. By the third century Rome talked little Greek, and by the fourth it was purely a Latin city again. Are we not obliged to say that God used the Greek language as one powerful help to the spread of the Gospel; and is it not certain that the English language in India can help to serve a similar purpose?

The Greek language inevitably carried with it Greek ideas, which as inevitably affected men's religious beliefs. We like to know not only what great writers thought, but what ordinary men in city and village believed. From the practical point of view to-day the beliefs of Ramaswami matter more in the village than the religion of the Rig Veda; and the case was the same with the Græco-Roman Empire. There is plenty of evidence that the religion of the uneducated majority of the population was wonderfully like the popular religion of villagers in India or Ceylon to-day. Have we thirty-three crores of deities in India? A Greek poet once wrote that the air was so full of deities that there was no room to put in the spike of an ear of corn without touching one. Our village religion has nothing to do with conscience, nor had theirs. Have we a deity whose help the thief solicits before he steals? They had Cloacina. Have we gods or demons for every kind of lust, for every kind of disease, for protection of crops, or for the molestation of unwary men? They had them all, with different names. Have we trees, wells, and stones which gods are said to inhabit? They had them all. The villager in Italy at the time when Paul

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was in Rome had the same reasons to be nervous about going out at nights as has the villager in Ceylon to-day. Perhaps the house which Paul rented had, as most Roman houses had, a little room set apart for family gods, the Lares, little stone figures sometimes in the form of a snake, sometimes in the shape of a young man, all black from being constantly anointed in worship. Such a room must have looked exactly like the pūja room in Hindu houses to-day. Outside the house in ancient Italy, just as in modern India, were sacred stones to which the mother of the house would pray to cure her child of fever. Ancestor worship played almost as prominent a part in the religion of Rome as in the religion of India. Terrible consequences would result if spirits of deceased fathers were not fed by their eldest sons. The grief felt by a Hindu father who has no heir to perform his srāddha ceremony, or whose heir has become a Christian, was felt in exactly the same way and for exactly the same reasons by any Roman father in similar case. The prevailing popular religion had all the usual features and all the undesirable effects of animism. Fauns and satyrs now are mythical beings which can be prettily mentioned in poems. But once the common people believed in them and were very much afraid. All unity or meaning in life disappears when it is overshadowed by a multitude of incalculable, capricious, supernatural beings. For the common man no advance in knowledge, civilization, or religion was possible until the popular polytheism had been undermined.

But for vast numbers of the educated it had been undermined by Greek thought, in the same way as village paganism in India has been largely undermined by Western education. Plato had dreamed of a great god enthroned like the one sun in the heavens, and the man who had caught that vision could never rest content with his crowd of godlings. Other Greeks were sceptics, and their ideas dissolved men's fear of a god in the tree or stone. Not that they wished to enlighten the common people. The terrors of religion were useful, they thought, for keeping the vulgar multitude in order. Recall the pictures of the tortures of evil-doers in the future world to be seen alike in Buddhist temples and on some old stained-glass windows in Christian churches. These things are supposed to keep in check the lawless and ignorant, but enlightened men scarcely take them seriously. That was precisely the attitude toward religion of most of the men who had passed through some school of Greek philosophy. And yet in spite of the enlightenment, superstition flourished, and polytheistic practice often enough accompanied a theoretic belief in the existence of one God or a denial of any god. "After all there might be something in it," thought clever men when they began to consider the abandoning of some hoary rite. Their women liked the superstition and took it seriously, and doubtless sometimes the women served the men as an excuse. A young student of Calcutta university may talk like Herbert Spencer at the college debates, but the religious practices in his house continue as before. Moreover, then

as now, there was no lack of people who could find a mystical or allegorical or pseudo-scientific reason for everything old or strange.

Some of the religious processions in the streets on holy days must have looked much like those with which we are familiar: for the idol in its best clothes was carried through the streets with beat of drum and blast of horn, and crowds of attendant priests. Away in the temple were the vestal virgins, the devadāsīs of their time. It was all a strange medley of wisdom and folly, of theoretic enlightenment alongside of practical superstition, and it could not satisfy the best longings of human hearts. So they began increasingly to turn towards forms of religion that came from the East.

3. *Oriental Conceptions, Then and Now.*

When men felt the desire for something purer than the life they knew, or when the death of loved ones made them look wistfully towards a life beyond the grave, the old Roman or Greek religions had nothing to say. So they began to turn to foreign deities, from Phrygia, from Egypt, from Persia—gods that promised some kind of salvation to the individual soul. Terrible rites were done in honour of Cybele, "The great Mother," with frenzied scenes of what we should call devil-dancing, accompanied by blood-shedding and horrible self-mutilation. There was the gentler worship of Isis, who helped women in childbirth, and told of future happenings. There were the rites of Mithras, whose name comes from India, as the twin-god of

Varuṇa, but who in the course of evolution had become the sun-god, the soldier's special deity, who required from his devotees moral as well as ceremonial purification. All these were religions not for a single nation, but for men as men. All of them offered some kind of salvation from the ills and sorrows of this present life, which the paganism of Greece and Rome never attempted to give. As missionary religions they were Christianity's most formidable rivals; and the ordinary observer in the second century would have found it difficult to prophesy which, if any, of all these religions would capture the whole Empire's allegiance. Christianity won the victory, but the other faiths left their mark upon it. They taught Christians to glorify asceticism. They laid an emphasis on individual salvation which sometimes detached men too completely from the family and the state. And some scholars think that it was one of these religions, the Egyptian, which passed on to the Catholic Church the custom of placing in the religious foreground that picture of the mother and child which has ever since been one of the most prominent features of Christianity in the Orthodox and Roman Churches. The Madonna and Child may be perhaps just Isis and Horus Christianized. This influx of foreign religions is often called by historians the influx of "orientalism," for it meant the spirit of the East pervading the West. The East here alluded to probably did not go much further than the Euphrates, unlike the East of our day which is commonly considered to begin at the Suez Canal and end perhaps

with Japan. But when we look at the thoughts which then came from the East, they bear an unmistakable family likeness to ideas still prevalent throughout India. As yet there is no available evidence to prove a direct connection between India and the oriental teachings of the second and third centuries. But there was certainly intercourse with India, and the resemblance of the ideas is so close that those who are most familiar with characteristic Indian views of life will easily believe that India contributed something to the thoughts of many circles in the Roman Empire in the early centuries of our era. So it may be not for the first time that now in India Christianity has come into vital contact with Indian religious and philosophical ideas.

4. *Influences for Monotheism, Then and Now.*

In every important city of the Roman Empire was to be found at least one plain rectangular building, often with a pole rising from the roof—the synagogue of the Jews. Wherever Paul travelled the Jews were settled, and it was to their synagogues that he first directed his steps. In Egypt there are said to have been a million Jews, and in Alexandria two whole wards of the city were theirs, for all practical purposes a separate Jewish town. There were ten thousand of them in Rome, and it has been estimated that they formed nearly seven per cent. of the total population of the whole Empire. Nowadays the Jews number only some fifteen millions, scattered among the vast population of the whole earth, a much less conspicuous and influential element

than they must have been in those early centuries.

It was not by mere birth-rate that the little nation of Jews, from one of the smallest of the provinces, had grown so numerous as to become seven per cent. of the total population of the Empire. It was because Judaism had become a missionary religion. While some Jews had the kind of proselytising spirit which our Lord rebuked (Matt. xxiii. 15), others felt that their religion was a treasure given to them in trust for all nations. The whole world needed the knowledge of the one spiritual God and His holy law, and every Nineveh should have its Jonah. So when the Jews scattered for trade all along the great roads, some went in the spirit of zealous missionaries, and won converts among the highest as well as among the lowest classes of society. While there were plenty of Jewish fortune-tellers and beggars, there was also a Jewish proselyte King of Adiabene, and there was the Empress Poppæa, Nero's wife. Alike among rich and poor their very presence must have been a reminder of the belief in one holy God, and a much more effectual reminder than that of the enlightened Greek Platonists. For to the Jew the oneness of God was not a theoretic deduction from philosophical reasoning, it was the fact at the root of all things. The Jewish synagogues, as is shown in the Book of Acts, became great centres of hostility to Christianity, yet as witnesses to monotheism all over the Empire they were a most valuable preparation for the Christian propaganda. They formed a bridge by which the Christian Gospel rapidly passed over into the pagan

world. Stephen, as later St. Paul, is a clear illustration. He was a Jew of the Dispersion, and he laid down his life to show the universal implications in both Judaism and Christianity.

Instead of the Jews we have the Mohammedans, Semitic monotheists like the Jews, forming more than one-fifth of the population. Jews and Mohammedans have much in common, not least their fierce resistance to Christianity as a kind of treachery to the unity of God. But just as the Jews who hated Christianity, nevertheless by their preaching about God prepared the way for it, so we may surely say that the presence of sixty-six million Mohammedans among a people given over to polytheism has kept alive the thought of the oneness of God, proclaiming one element in His being which Christianity endorses and vitally supplements.

5. *Reflections on these Parallels.*

Of course there are differences, many and great, between the situation in the ancient Roman Empire and that which we face in modern India. But are not the similarities sufficient to provide us with some valuable suggestions? First, we must surely see that as once to the Roman Empire, so now to India and Ceylon, the religion of Christ has come "in the fulness of time." The same Providence which made the whole Roman Empire ready for the religion of Christ to permeate from end to end has been watching over India and Ceylon, preparing the way for the advent of Jesus Christ among the many millions of their peoples.

Again, this backward look suggests to us encouragement as we turn to the future. Are we conscious of the weaknesses of our cause in face of the vast numbers, of the strange ideas, of the whole situation amid which it has to be promoted in our land? Our religion has met this kind of difficulty before and has overcome it. We Christians in India are only one per cent. of the population, and are often treated as insignificant. But it was a despised minority which spread the knowledge of Christ to the remotest parts of the Roman Empire. The permeation of India with the ideals of Christ is not the dream of overwrought enthusiasts; it is something shown by historical precedent to be not only perfectly possible and practicable, but to be inevitable if Christian people are faithful.

But, once more, it was the ordinary Jew and not professional religious propagandists who filled the Empire with synagogues and unconsciously prepared the way for the teaching of Christ. It was equally the common Christian who followed the ordinary Jew, taking advantage of the way prepared, and spreading everywhere the knowledge of his Master as he went about his daily business. And in the long run it must be the ordinary Indian Christian, and not the specially trained exponent of Christianity supported by the Churches of the West, who will penetrate the remotest regions and spheres of life in India with the knowledge of Christ.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD OF CHURCH HISTORY, OR THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

1. *Our Attitude to the Apostolic Age.*

THE age of the Apostles—men who had known Christ in the flesh, who had witnessed the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, who were the first to experience the amazing enhancement of human powers by the descent of the Divine Spirit, and who in the strength of that experience founded the first congregations of Christian believers—such an age must needs be the classical age of the Church, to which more than any other we look for the best guidance on the essentials of Church life. That does not mean that we are to try to make some slavish copy of it in the present day, for the conditions of that day cannot be repeated. We shall not, for example, live in expectation of the immediate visible second coming of our Lord because the first Christians anticipated that such an event would take place while most of its members were still alive. But we can see enough of the life which animated the first Church for us to understand what must be the most essential features in the life of the Church in any age or country. India needs no slavish imitation of primitive Christianity. But the

Indian Church needs nothing more urgently than to be endowed with the spirit which made the first Church so divinely vital and powerful.

2. A Primitive Church Meeting.

Can we picture to ourselves a gathering of one of those earliest Churches? A group of people are met together in a house in Corinth. Many of them are slaves. The house belongs to one of the Christians and is large enough for the gathering. Three or four weighty senior members of the Church (elders) have arranged things and have gathered the brethren together, but they do not conduct the service. There is prayer by someone. Then an Old Testament Psalm is recited in Greek, followed by singing which may one day include the Magnificat or the Gloria. One person rises and tells a story of Christ, perhaps reciting some incident from a Gospel hitherto unknown to most or all of those present. Feeling is being stirred; a "prophet" rises whose face shows that he is "in the Spirit." He speaks very solemnly, believing that he has God's own message to communicate, and there is an atmosphere in which all feel that God's voice can be heard. When he ceases another man rises, and in a voice now low and indistinct, now loud and impassioned, gives forth some utterance which most men cannot understand. He is rapt, and possibly does not even himself know what he is saying. His voice sinks to silence, and the man who sits next him, it may be, rises to declare to the assembly what was the meaning of those incomprehensible words. Now all share

in the exultation which the tongue-speaker had felt. There is an interruption; a non-Christian Greek who happened to come to the meeting, and who has been watching all that takes place, can bear it no longer; he falls on his face crying out that Jesus is Lord. He came only as a spectator, but he has become a participant. No wonder he is impressed. There is no artificial eloquence of words in that meeting, but there is certainly an unearthly power, to be met with nowhere else. The presence of the Spirit is a reality which no one in the room can doubt.

Attempts have been made in these days to revive the practice of "speaking with tongues." When the ordinary gatherings of the Church are too often lifeless and dull, it is not remarkable that some should seek to revive the emotional exhilaration of those first days. Such must ever bear in mind that St. Paul, who had this particular gift in special measure, set slight store by its value to the Church, and would rather speak five words with his understanding than ten thousand words in a tongue. St. Paul felt that what matters to the Church is not visible effervescence, but the deep quickening of inward life; not strange psychopathic manifestations, but the less showy fruits of the Spirit. On the other hand, those of us who are apt to be content with dead and respectable meetings are in no better case than those who show life in riotous emotionalism. Merely formal "dead and alive" meetings to-day are no truer Church meetings, in the primitive sense of the term, than are those gatherings of the Pentecostal League where emotion is artificially stimulated. All

of us alike need to pray for that outpouring of the Divine Spirit upon all God's people which alone constitutes them into a Church in the New Testament sense of the term. The "one man worship" into which sometimes our Sunday services degenerate, worship in which the spirits of all but the minister are merely passive, is untrue to type and condemned by the example of the first Church.

Whether it showed itself in speaking with tongues or not, the sense of the infilling of the Divine Spirit is the characteristic note of the first Church everywhere. It was by being filled with the Spirit that a man showed himself to be a Christian. That was what made Peter sure of Cornelius. Not only Apostles but all Christian people felt themselves to be in the grasp of a supernatural power, guided hither and thither in ways impossible to unaided human understanding, and enabled to accomplish things impossible to ordinary human faculties. The whole body was so pervaded by a joyous enthusiasm, which by its works could be recognized as being the Spirit of Christ, that it could be described as the living body of the risen Lord; all the gifts which any member possessed were Spirit-given, and destined for the building up of the whole body. They might be gifts which, like miraculous healing, or speaking with tongues, disappeared from the Church's life under different conditions; or they might be gifts of administration possessed by elders or bishops, or gifts of service, possessed by deacons; or they might be gifts of hospitality, of sympathy, of affection for other Christians, or magnanimity in return for evil

(see Romans xii.). Indeed it is most noteworthy how St. Paul lays increasing emphasis on the Spirit-gifts of character and conduct which have their sphere in common, everyday domestic and social intercourse—the warp and woof of three-fourths of our conscious life. This is the sphere of the “conscience” in its characteristically Christian sense, in which the will is operative in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit of God within, revealed as the Spirit of Christ. But whatever they were, they were in their several ways inspired by the Spirit, poured out upon the Church through the risen Christ. It would be futile for us in India to imagine that we were following the example of the first Church, if we merely copied some of the external forms, without realizing that the life which alone gives value to those forms is the life of the Church, permeated through and through, both individually and collectively, with the life of the Divine Spirit. Life must organize its own outward expression; and the life of the first Church was in the fullest sense of the term Spirit-filled.

3. *The Passion for Unity.*

(a) *Local Unity.*

It is often assumed that if Churches everywhere were independently to follow the Spirit's guidance there would be hopeless disorder rendering real unity impossible. In view of this it is interesting to note that the earliest Churches passionately exalted the virtue of unity. Each Church was a brotherhood

linked together by the most intimate of ties; the spirit which each individual member received was also a spirit of fellowship. Fellowship (*koinōnia*) became one of the great New Testament words, and isolated Christian life was quite unknown. There was an atmosphere of love which made each little community an organism, feeling throughout its whole being the sorrows or joys of particular members. Sometimes this showed itself as an economic fellowship, as when lands were sold by the richer for the benefit of the poorer brethren. In the regular activity of the Church it was shown in, and immensely strengthened by, the love-feast, crowned by the Eucharist, which first united the brethren in table fellowship, and then sanctified that fellowship by all the hallowed associations of the Last Supper. The Epistles of the New Testament not only abound in exhortations to unity; all their great promises concerning Christian life and character are made to Christians who are in fellowship one with another (see e.g., Ephesians iii. and iv.).

We cannot get any clear picture of the early Church without feeling by contrast the poverty of the corporate life of our Churches in India. We live in a caste-ridden country where divisive tendencies are in the moral atmosphere, so that petty disputes easily separate people into cliques, and our Churches have suffered thereby. For that very reason it is essential for us to seek in fuller measure that Christian fellowship without which there can be no Spirit-filled Church. It is sometimes easier to work for schemes of union of the whole great Church of Christ

than to manifest living spiritual fellowship with awkward members of our own local Church. But such schemes of union are utterly vain without that common sharing of Christians in the divine Spirit of which they should be the organized expression. There is special value in everything which can strengthen in our local Churches the sense of belonging to one body. If we need not imitate the "love-feast" of the first Church, we do need something equivalent, and it probably should take the form of a common meal. There ought to be a oneness between us all which is obvious to the most superficial outside observer.

(b) *Unity of the Church Universal.*

There was no link of organization uniting Churches of New Testament times with the Churches of other provinces and countries, but only the personal link afforded by occasional visits of Apostles or other Christians. With no machinery of unity we might have expected that Churches would be quite detached from each other, which makes it the more striking that the opposite is what occurred. Nothing is clearer in the documents of the apostolic age than the feeling of all Christians that the Church universal is one. The individual local Church never forgot the collective Church throughout all lands, of which it felt itself to be the local representative. The sense of the unity of the whole Church is expressed for example in the earliest Eucharistic prayer which has come down to us: "As this piece of bread was once scattered (as grain) upon the top of the moun-

tains, and then being gathered together became one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom."

Is there no suggestion here of reconciliation between two schools of thought concerning Church unity in India? Some say, "Let each individual congregation of Christian people manage its own affairs—we want no great machinery or organization, which is unsuitable for India." They have put their finger on a real truth. A unity which mainly depended upon elaborate machinery would be of little value, and the life of the Church universal is of little value apart from the vigorous Spirit-filled local fellowship of each constituent part. It is probably also true that India finds more difficulties than many other lands in the management of elaborate machinery of organization. But those who hold this side of the truth must not forget the other, that catholicity was a note of all Church life in the best period of its history. In the circumstances in which we find ourselves in modern India, without such a link as the first Churches possessed in a single language or in the apostolic visits, there would be grave loss to unity unless some means were found of giving practical embodiment to that wider unity of the Church universal which needs to be deeply realized by every member of each local congregation. While the early Church precedent proves that unity is a matter of spirit and not of organization, nevertheless some minimum of common organization seems to be a necessity of our time.

(c) Nationality and Catholicity.

Another consideration suggests itself in this connection. The wave of national feeling which has swept over India has stirred in many hearts the desire for a truly indigenous Church, which shall cease to imitate Western Christianity and find characteristic Indian expressions for all its life. That such a desire is legitimate can hardly be doubted, whether we study fundamental principles or historical precedent. The Church in India *must* be really Indian if it is truly alive. But our history suggests a word of caution. There is little doubt that Church life in Achaia worked out in forms different from those of Church life in Judæa. "The Corinthian in Jerusalem found himself in a society stiff, uncouth, severe, formal, pedantic. The Jewish Christian in Corinth must have thought the Church there given over to unbridled license."* And yet the Churches in both countries were in vital touch with each other. Each faithfully remembered the other, and was ready on occasion to minister to the other's need. The Epistles show how much importance St. Paul attached to the collection throughout the Greek Churches in aid of the "Saints" who were at Jerusalem. He regarded it as a practical expression of the existing spiritual unity which mattered so much. St. Paul was ready to fight to the death against any attempt to impose merely Judaic forms on a Greek Church. But he made it one of his greatest aims to foster between Jewish and Greek Churches the strongest possible sense of spiritual

* *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours*, by Roland Allen, p.172.

unity, and to give that unity as much outward expression as he could. A Church merely Greek or merely Judæan would have been to him unthinkable. The Church in India must be truly indigenous, but can never be merely national. It may and should create specially Indian forms of life and worship, but it must never lose its catholicity. The more truly it expresses the genius of the country for the service of Christ the better for India, but it must never get cut off from the holy Church throughout all the world, else it will suffer in its own life and deprive the Church Universal of the special contribution which Indian Christianity ought to make to the one Body of Christ.

(d) Economics and Church Unity.

We know, unfortunately, little about the economic condition of the members of the apostolic Churches. Some had more than they needed of this world's goods, but a good many New Testament references suggest that the poor were numerous. In normal times each local Church, however poor, supported itself, and in some cases, such as that of the Church at Philippi, sent occasional help to the Apostle Paul in distant places. We have seen how at a time of special need in the Jerusalem Churches, the Churches in Gentile provinces joined together to send through St. Paul a gift of money which was probably large, and was specially valued by the Apostle as a demonstration of the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christendom.

The position was the reverse of that which is so

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familiar to us in India, the economic dependence of the "mission" Church upon aid from the parent Church. Corinth received no grant from Jerusalem, but sent money to help Jerusalem in its need. Obviously the difference in standards of living between English and Indian Churches makes a complication vitiating comparisons with the apostolic Churches which might otherwise be made. It was only right in the past that English Christians should demonstrate their unity with Indian Christians by helping them to support their ministry. But in these days the economic dependence of Indian upon English Churches is becoming increasingly undesirable and is the regret of all true Indians. It ought to come to an end at the earliest possible moment. The present growth of self-support in many parts of the Indian Church is an encouraging sign of progress. Before long Tinnevely, Madras, and Bombay will be in finance as independent of Europe and America as were Asia and Achaia of Judæa. And the day may come when once more the unity of the Church Universal will be demonstrated by finance, this time by the help sent by Christians from India to their fellow believers in the West in some great hour of need.

4. *The position of the Apostles.*

One cannot study the apostolic Church without recognizing throughout its life the apostolic influence. The Apostles, under the leading of the Spirit, guided all the most important developments of the Church in their time, as was natural in the spiritual fathers

of the Churches. "For though ye should have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel." (1 Cor. iv. 15.) Indeed it has seemed to some at least of the most careful students of the New Testament, such as the late Dr. Hort of Cambridge, that the ill-defined but lofty authority which they exerted was simply "the result of the spontaneous homage of the Christians among whom they laboured," and that there is "no trace of a formal communication of authority for government from Christ Himself."* It was inevitable that such leadership should go along with the Apostolic function of primary witness to the gospel and mind of Christ. With very little imagination we can guess how readily a Church of apostolic days would yield its reverence to men as full of the Holy Spirit and of power as the first Apostles, men, too, who had companied with the Lord, and witnessed the great events of His earthly history. A saintly pioneer Christian founder of a modern Church, keeping in touch with that Church throughout his life, might exert a very similar authoritative influence as primary local witness to the Gospel. But in the case of the Apostles there was the added weight of their more direct contact with the historical Jesus. There were other apostles, however, besides the Twelve, such as Paul and Barnabas, Andronicus and Junias (Rom. xvi. 7). From St. Paul's own letters we know that he regarded the ordinary government of a Church as belonging to itself under the lead of the local

*Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, p. 86.

ministry. When a Church seemed in danger of going wrong in some grave matter such as insistence on circumcision, denial of the resurrection, or degradation of the "Table of the Lord," St. Paul wrote in no uncertain tones, and expected his words to have great weight (Gal. v. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 14 and 15; 1 Cor. xi. 16). But on the other hand he argued each matter out from first principles of faith, pleading with the Church to make the right decision for itself. He wished them to become "full grown men in understanding" (1 Cor. xiv. 20), and so sought to educate their spiritual insight by the means which is needful to anything like spiritual maturity, viz., its responsible exercise in practice. Hence he never issued an order that the Church was to do certain things in blind obedience to his authority.

5. *Beginnings of Organization.*

All the evidence goes to show that at the time of the Apostles the organization of the Churches was fluid and transitional. Under the pressure of developing requirements, guided by the constant presence of the Spirit within, the brethren were finding out the best ways of meeting the needs of their rapidly growing society. There was no ready-made scheme of Church government delivered by Christ to the Apostles and by the Apostles to the Church. Followers of Him Who exalted greatness in service above all other greatness (Mark x. 42 f.), and Who deprecated the use of titles, "for one is your teacher and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8), could hardly begin at once to set up a hierarchy of govern-

ment. Rather, in every country as need pressed, the assembly of believers developed some kind of Church order along the lines of its native religious habits. The Book of Acts takes that so much as a matter of course requiring no explanation that it says far less about organization than we should have expected.

There is no space here for a review of the evidence concerning the early meanings attached to the words "elders or presbyters," "overseers or bishops," "deacons," or the subsequent evolution of the later three-fold ministry. These are matters upon which controversy is still going on. But enough is clear and generally accepted by scholars to show that for the Church of Christ in India to-day, provided it depends fully on the leading of the indwelling Spirit, there is on the one hand complete liberty, and on the other an obligation from which there is no escape. There is complete liberty to develop such forms of Church organization as best express the life "in Christ" for Indian Christians. There is no authoritative historical precedent which we in India must follow or be disloyal. On the other hand there rests upon us the obligation to maintain touch with the holy Church Universal, and bear that Church's witness to the whole world outside. History teaches us the plain duty of combining freedom with catholicity, and of doing local service with a world-wide outlook. While we do the work for Christ lying at our doors, the progress of the Christian Church in China or America claims our interest, and we are commissioned to spread the Gospel not only

through India but through the whole world. There is no more disquieting feature of the life of some of our older Churches than their restriction of attention to their own local affairs, and their inevitably resultant failure to grow.

6. *The Caste Question.*

The Book of Acts is very largely the story of how the growing religion burst one after another the bands which tried to restrict its growth. Not only Jews but Samaritans came to receive its benefits. Then Peter, through the case of Cornelius, was divinely shown that an exceptional form of Christianity was possible even for Gentiles. But the greatest question which the new religion had to face was not whether a few Gentiles might be acknowledged as Christians by a Church mainly Jewish, but whether the Church could boldly show that in Christ a new principle of unity had been found strong enough to bridge over the most ancient, the widest, and deepest gulfs that separate man from man. There was no deeper division of the ancient world than that which separated Jew from Gentile. It was in the great city of Antioch, where the new religion came into contact with all forms of the civilization of the Roman Empire, that there was first formed a company of Christians who were uncircumcised, with whom, consequently, an orthodox Jew could not eat without shocking Jewish susceptibilities, just as those of a Brahman are shocked by seeing a Christian convert from his caste freely mingling with pariahs. The question had to be faced, "What in Christianity

is essential, and what is non-essential?" and on the answer depended the unity of the Church. No wonder Peter and Barnabas wavered. At last a grand conference on the subject was held at Jerusalem, and there in the midst of the conservative surroundings of orthodox Judaism the clear insight of St. Paul carried the day. He had learnt in bitter struggle of soul the powerlessness of the law, and in the joy of deliverance had found that in Christ all relationships were changed, *all* things had become new. The elder apostles gave him their support, and in the findings of the Jerusalem Conference Jewish Christians voluntarily gave up in obedience to Christian charity that which a few years before they would have died to maintain, the old caste custom which prevented Jews from eating with Gentiles. "The Jerusalem Conference marks one of the greatest triumphs in the moral history of humanity."* Two principles are clearly embodied in its decisions. (a) That which divides men by ancient custom is infinitely less powerful than that which unites them when both are finding their salvation in Christ. "We shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they" (Acts xv. 11). (b) For the sake of mutual intercourse any one set of Christians must be willing to abandon customs which while harmless in themselves are unnecessary and offensive to other Christians.

The struggle was not yet ended. Throughout St. Paul's Epistles we notice a constant insistence on the oneness which bridged over every gulf at

* J. V. Bartlett, in *Christ and Civilization*, p. 166.

that time dividing humanity (Gal. iii. 28, Eph. ii. 14, etc.). St. Paul realized more clearly than anyone else in his day that this oneness in Christ was an essential element of the new religion.

All this has an intensely practical interest for the Church of Christ in India. Caste is a system of social separation not exactly like the separation between Jew and Gentile, yet in its practical results closely similar. And whether it be between Vellālas and Panchamas in Jaffna or Tanjore, or between Shānars and Pulayas in Travancore, or between Mālas and Mādigas in the Telugu mass movements, or even between English and Indian Churches in India, an amount of separation exists at present which endangers the unity of the Church of Christ. The principles by which the Church joined Jew and Gentile in a higher unity are a safe guide still. Christ is so much to the Christian that the most fundamental worldly distinctions, even those of caste or race, are swallowed up in a common allegiance to Him. In Christ there can be neither caste man nor pariah, neither white man nor coloured, neither European nor Sinhalese nor African, but Christ is all and in all. No Church can be permanently strong which is not true to this fundamental principle.

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At the same time the decision of the Jerusalem Council suggests that each group of Christians must be prepared for the sake of mutual fellowship to give up customs which though harmless in themselves are an unnecessary obstacle to mutual fellowship. The Christian of low-caste origin has his sacrifices

to make as well as the Christian from the higher castes, and must be as willing to give up old customs which seriously offend the other brethren as the Gentile Christian had to be willing to give up the eating of things strangled.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY AND ORIENTAL THOUGHT, OR THE ENCOUNTER WITH GNOSTICISM.

I. *The Tendency to Eclecticism, Then and Now.*

THE streams of Christian and of Indian thought as yet have flowed in different channels, as if they had nothing to do with each other. But they must come together at last, and already we see frequent attempts being made, as they must be made, to state Christian truth in Indian religious terms. The tendency of our age and country is towards eclecticism, the gathering together into a composite whole of heterogenous elements drawn from a variety of sources. Particularly marked is this tendency in circles influenced by theosophy, which under the influence of its tenet of "the brotherhood of religions" tends more than other systems to draw materials from every faith.

All eclectic systems in the long run suffer from lack of vitality. You cannot build up a living man by borrowing a leg here, an arm there, and a head from somewhere else. An inward life must create its own organic form. Further, when you combine with your original principle, which may be that of simple trust in Christ, some really incompatible idea such as that of initiation into secret things of creation, one or the other idea must suffer. There are

some combinations into which Christianity cannot enter without loss. And yet no prophecy is more easy to make than that before another generation has passed away we shall see all manner of incongruous joinings together of Christian and non-Christian principles. That is why the story of Gnosticism is important for us.

There are already in existence sects which attempt a fusion of Islām and Christianity, or of Hinduism and Christianity, or of all the three religions together. The founder of the Aḥmadiyas in the Punjab claimed to be alike the Christian Messiah, the Mohammedan Maḥdi, and the final avatar of the Hindus. The Chet Rāmis in the same province have made a curious compound of Christian doctrine with Hindu and Mohammedan ideas and practices. The Isāmoshipanthis in South Behar have mixed up the story of Jesus with the story of Kṛishṇa. The Rādhā Soāmi sect, while essentially Hindu in teaching and practice, borrows such Christian phrases as "the Heavenly Father," "His beloved Son," "Man's creation in God's image," and many of its forms of worship are Christian. The founder of the Deva Samāj in Lahore, Baluchistan and the United Provinces, taught a wonderful compound of doctrines from Henry Drummond, Herbert Spencer, and Hinduism.* These movements as yet are small in influence, but they give a foretaste of what we may expect to see on a large scale as Christianity spreads in India.

*See J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Chap. III, pp. 137-185.

2. *Gnosis (Gnānam).*

We can see traces of the beginnings of Gnosticism even in the New Testament, in Simon Magus (as explained by information from other sources), in the Epistle to the Colossians, the Epistles to Timothy, the First Epistle of John, the Nicolaitans of the Apocalypse, and the antinomian teachers mentioned in the Epistle of Jude. But it was in the second century, after the great Apostles had passed away, that Gnosticism so flourished as to menace the future of the Christian religion.

Christians had been bidden to "add to their faith" virtue and "knowledge" (gnosis, 2 Peter i. 5). The writer meant knowledge that is religious and moral. A man could not have such knowledge and sin at the same time. "He that saith, I know God, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar" (1 John ii. 4). Faith in a person, which is the foundation on which the whole Christian religion is built up, involves no small amount of knowledge. We intuitively know the person whom we trust. There is nothing intellectualistic about such knowledge. But the Greek mind was speculative, and fastened upon the commendation of knowledge as if it meant that ignorance rather than sin is the enemy to be removed, and that enlightenment is the great process of redemption. We might say that to the Gnostics the way of faith, or the *bhakti mārga*, was merely the lowest rung of the ladder at the top of which was the way of knowledge, or the *gnāna mārga*. So opponents used as a nickname the title Gnostics, "Men who know" (*Gnānis*). They thought they

were interpreting the real meaning of Christianity, but they came to their task with minds full of ideas such as that matter is evil, so that God can have no direct connection with the world; and that the actual maker of the world was one of a chain of many beings intermediate between God and matter, some beings more spiritual and nearer to God, others more material and nearer to the world. To complete their speculative systems they drew materials from every source, from magic and astrology as well as from Greek philosophy. The results are such that we find it hard to think fairly of the Gnostics; they seem like idle fellows spinning theories for sheer love of the exercise. But most of them were better men than that. The best of them were feeling the need of a Christian theology which did not yet exist, and making wild and fantastic attempts after it. Others were of the ordinary eclectic type, and saw nothing incongruous in a medley of ideas drawn from the most unlikely sources. A few baser ones, unless their orthodox Christian opponents libelled them, found the moral restrictions of Christianity too rigid, and wanted a philosophy which would blur over the distinctions between good and evil, and justify the kind of life they wished to live. Some Gnostics were really Christian thinkers, with their balloon of speculation anchored to the historical facts concerning Christ. Others had let go the anchor, and drifted at the mercy of every wind of mystic speculation or human desire, with little more than reminiscences of Christianity clinging to the atmosphere they breathed.

3. *Three Gnostic Types.*(a) *The magical.*

Scholars distinguish, among many Gnostic systems, three main types. The first, of which Simon Magus may be taken as a specimen, was the crudest, producing a combination of Christianity and magic, with apparently the magic predominating. Simon Magus, we learn from several literary references to him, was a much more important person than we might from the book of Acts be led to suppose. He mingled astrology and the arts of magic with his teaching, and wandered from place to place with a companion Helena, who was styled Ennoia, the first Thought, the creative intelligence of the Deity.

(b) *The Syrian.*

The second or Syrian type grew up in Syria and Mesopotamia, countries where varied religions were in close contact. Christianity was here a somewhat insignificant element in a confused blend with Babylonian star-myths, Syro-Phœnician tales of the origin of the universe, Persian notions of light and darkness, even myths from serpent worship. For instance, among the varieties of Gnostics whom we find attacked in the writings of the great Irenæus, are Ophites, or snake-worshippers, also called Naasenes, which is Hebrew for the same thing. They told how the divine Mother has seven sons, the first of whom, Ialdebaoth, fixed his desire upon dregs of matter, whereby was produced in turn his son, Nous or Mind, twisted in the form of a serpent. This symbol of the serpent seems to have been borrowed from

the Phœnicians and Egyptians, with whom it played a great part. It is indeed hard for us, who are so familiar with the sight of snake stones under spreading trees, to understand why anyone should have wished to connect this with the religion of Christ. Still harder to understand are the Cainites, who, unless they are grossly libelled, inverted all ordinary ideas of morality. Cain, according to them, derived his being from the unknowable Power above. Men cannot be saved until they have gone through all kinds of experience, which includes immoral as well as moral. Such teachings as these were being promulgated as Christianity by sects scattered all over Syria and Mesopotamia, and the average unlearned man was not in the position of the modern instructed Christian with a Bible.

(c) *The Greek Type.*

The third or Greek type was the worthiest form of Gnosticism, upheld by such men as Valentinus, Basilides, Heracleon, and Bardesanes, all of them thinkers, some of them poets, who treated Christian history as allegory covering deeper philosophy. Unfortunately the Greek philosophy often counted for more than the historic fact, which is the usual way of allegorical interpretations. As a specimen of this kind of Gnosticism, take the system of Basilides. He begins where Hindu Vedantists begin, with a Supreme Being only to be described in negatives. From this Supreme Being emanated the following: Mind, Reason, Understanding, Wisdom, Power, Virtue (the order is that of their nearness to the

Supreme Being). From these in their turn emanate other beings, in 365 spiritual grades of existence. The lowest grade is the heaven which we see, whose angels made and rule our world, the chief among them being the God of the Jews. If man was to be redeemed from this low grade of existence a higher power was needed, so the unknown Father sent forth Mind, who appeared in this world and united himself with Jesus at his baptism. The man Jesus was merely the instrument of his manifestation, and even that man only in appearance died on the Cross; his higher nature returned to its own region. Thereby all who believe in him, and are capable of redemption, are gradually illuminated, purified, and enabled to ascend on high. The rest have no knowledge of anything higher, nor desire for it. The whole theory may seem to us fantastic, but in its fundamental thought it is closely allied to our advaita philosophies, while its personifications of mental principles are very similar to those of which we read in some books of the Theosophists, the spiritual descendants of the Gnostics in our own days. And this system, too, was being spread abroad among educated men as the true interpretation of the Christian revelation.

4. *Marcion.*

One of the greatest Gnostics, Marcion, is quite distinct from the three types mentioned, and needs separate treatment, for in his own time he was a man to be reckoned with. The son of a rich ship-owner at Pontus, he came to Rome about A.D. 139, tried

to reform the Church there, but about A.D. 144 broke away and founded a Church of his own. He spread his views by numerous journeys, with the result that Marcionite Churches soon sprang up in every province of the Empire, and some of them lasted till the seventh century A.D. Marcion felt himself to have discovered the secret of St. Paul, the great contrast between grace and law, works and faith, Old and New Testament, and therein he found the key to all mysteries. The Old Testament is the revelation of the creator of the world, the God of the Jews, the Just God, quite a different being from the God of love and grace; as such it stands in sharpest contrast to the Gospel. This world is under the God of the Jews, governed by an inflexible and sometimes brutal law. In direct opposition to that God is the God of love, absolutely unknown until Christ revealed Him. Being a God of goodness and mercy, He could not bear to see men tormented by their just yet malevolent lord, so appeared in Christ in order to deliver men's souls (not their bodies, which like all matter are hopelessly evil) from the creator of this world. Christ came down from heaven in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, assumed the *appearance* of a body, and began preaching in Capernaum (Luke iv. 31). Everything which He did was the opposite of what the merely just God would have done, and at last the followers of the just God crucified Him. As to Christian conduct, since this world is under the power of the inferior God, the strictest asceticism was enjoined, and no union of the sexes was per-

mitted. Marcion clearly recognized that many of the Christian documents contradicted his view of things, so he asserted that corruption had early set in, and boldly constructed a Canon for his own community, including in it a mutilated Gospel of Luke and ten of the Epistles of St. Paul, purged of passages which he considered inconsistent. Marcion was almost the first after Paul to take seriously Paul's teaching of grace and law, or to see how in it Christianity brought to the world something new. He saw many difficulties which he could not solve, e.g. in the differences between the Old and New Testament teachings, which we solve to-day by the conception of a *gradual* revelation. His worst mistake was in separating righteousness or justice from love in God, not recognizing that each of these qualities is poor without the other, and that both are essential elements of the one perfect Being. And his whole thinking was spoiled by the idea which lies at the root of most of the non-Christian thinking which we meet in India, the idea that matter is something essentially evil.

All the Gnostic systems had in common certain fundamental conceptions such as the following:—Matter is the home of all evil, spirit the home of all good. This world is a mixture of the two, the product of a being inferior to the Supreme. There is a higher world, that of the spirit, inhabited by graded hierarchies of being emanating successively from God. There cannot have been a real incarnation, for that would have placed Christ also in bondage to evil matter. Man is a captive spirit entangled in

the world of matter. Christ, who is a concentration of the light and virtue of the spirit world, and high in the chain of beings between God and man, comes to deliver the spiritual part of man from matter by giving him the true understanding of things. Christians may be divided into two classes, the lower, saved by faith, and the higher, saved by knowledge.

It is certain that some Gnostics borrowed from Buddhism, and some scholars think that Indian thought formed the ground-work of most of the Gnostic systems. There certainly is a remarkable enough similarity to ideas common in India for us to think that there is some connection, though it seems as if the Indian ideas were first absorbed in Greek philosophy, and in that form brought into connection with Christianity by the Gnostics.

5. *The real danger.*

The chief danger from the whole Gnostic movement was that the Church might become a Theosophical Society offering enlightenment to an esoteric circle, instead of a Church of Christ offering redemption to all mankind. It was such men as Irenæus who saved the situation by their insistence upon Christ's historical personality as the basis of all Christian thinking, to which the whole of it must be related, and by reference to which the whole of it must be justified. The struggle was prolonged, but produced valuable results. "It left a certain mark upon Catholicism, and partly by shaking older faiths, partly by preparing men's minds for a better belief, partly by compelling the leaders of the Church to

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ask what they believed and why they believed it, aided not inconsiderably in the triumph of the Gospel and in the development of the Creed. But in the second century, while it was yet living and aggressive, it constituted a danger greater than the Arian controversy, greater than any peril that has ever menaced the existence of the faith.”*

6. *Results of the Struggle, their Value for India.*

One incidental beneficent result of the struggle was that the Church was forced finally to determine the limits of the Canon of Scripture. But the most direct result was the firm establishment of the following principles which Christians can never afford to let go, least of all in such a land as India.

1. Christianity is a religion alike for the learned and the simple, with no reserved places for a select intellectual aristocracy.

2. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Maker of heaven and earth. This world is no prison house of spirits, but the creation of His love.

3. Jesus Christ is no intermediate existence between God and man, but the Son of God and Son of Man, who came as a real man and unites us to God.

4. He saves us not from matter, but from sin; not by enlightenment, but by faith as personal loyalty to Him.

Christianity has yet to make Indian forms of theology in India, using familiar Indian religious

* Bigg, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 35.

terms for its thoughts. The task is a great and necessary, but also a difficult and dangerous one. Terms borrowed from other systems are very liable to bring with them an atmosphere different from the Christian. The Indian term Gnānam, for example, has received as many different interpretations as the Greek term Gnosis. The case of the Gnostics shows above all things the peril of any getting away from the historic facts of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Those facts are our touch-stone for the truth of all theories, and nothing can be accepted as Christian which does not justify itself in relation to them. When a Sanskrit pandit tells his class that the mystic syllable "Om" is the equivalent of "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," or when the Christian villager puts a Bible under his pillow to cure a headache, we are near to the conditions out of which the Gnostic peril grew. Our safety lies in keeping ever central and determinative in all our thinking the historic personality of the Founder of our religion. Without Him there is no Christian thinking.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT.

*The Argument with Jews Then and Moham-
medans Now.*

CHRISTIANITY, born in Judaism, disentangled from Judaism by the efforts of Paul and the leaders of the Apostolic Age, in the early generations of the Church had its severest conflict with Jews. There were too many Jews scattered over the Empire, forming as we have seen seven per cent. of the whole population, for the destruction of Jerusalem to bring their religion to an end, and wherever the religion of Christ went, it was met by them with bitter hatred.

In fairness we must remember how hard was the position for the Jew who was confronted with the rising young religion of Christianity. It seemed to him that Christians were trampling on all the ancient glory of the chosen people, while at the same time they were appropriating the best things of Judaism and claiming that they belonged to Christians. Circumcision to him had almost the sacredness of a sacrament; the Christians mocked at it and at many another rite hallowed for the Jew by divine institution. Worst of all, the Christians were traitors, so it seemed, to the belief in the one God which was Israel's message to the world, for they

proclaimed a second God alongside the Creator, a deified man who had suffered an ignominious death. Yet all the time they were claiming the Old Testament as if it were their special property. It will help us to realize the Jew's feelings if we observe those of many Mohammedans in India. For Islam is in its essence Judaism revived, reformed in the partial light of Christianity, and stereotyped at the level of Arabian life in the seventh century. The Mohammedan feels that we are seeking to destroy the glory of Islam, pride in which is a part of his religion. He has the Jew's feeling towards the uncircumcised outsider. Most of all, he feels that in our worship of Christ we are unfaithful to monotheism. In the struggle with Mohammedanism to-day, Christianity is engaging in a conflict very similar to that with Judaism in the first generations.

The early literature is full of indications of the struggle. Even when writing for Roman Emperors or for the general public, the defenders of Christianity found it necessary to explain their attitude to Judaism and to the Old Testament Scriptures. Antoninus Pius, for instance, if he ever read the Apology which Justin addressed to him, must have learnt much about the Jewish law-books and prophets. But the best sources of information concerning the formal argument with Judaism are Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew; Celsus' attack on Christianity in the person of a Jew, which is included in and replied to in Origen's *Against Celsus*; and Tertullian's book *Against the Jews*. As a specimen we will briefly examine the Dialogue with Trypho.

There was in Ephesus an open space called the Xystus, laid out with garden walks. There one day Justin, wearing as always the dress of a philosopher, is accosted by a group of Jews, one of whom has escaped from a war lately waged in Palestine. The conversation naturally turns to religion. Justin tells a story of himself which might be published in the Christian Literature Society's series, "How I became a Christian." Some of the Jews laugh aloud in mockery, but Trypho wants to hear more, so he and a few companions retire with Justin to some stone benches, and the argument proceeds. It is continued on a second day, and carried on courteously on both sides. Trypho is unconvinced, but parts as a friend, wishing Justin safety in the voyage for which he is daily expecting to set sail.

The following, in briefest summary, are a few of the things which are said :

TRYPHO: "You Christians live no differently from the Gentiles, keeping no law, observing neither sabbaths nor circumcision. While thus disobeying God, you set your hopes on a man who was crucified."

JUSTIN: "A new and final law has been given to us, and a new covenant. Look at your Scriptures, Isaiah liii. to liv., lv. verse 3 and following, Jeremiah xxxi., and many other places. It is you who disobey God, your land is justly desolate by God's visitation, and you may not even go up to Jerusalem."

(It is curious to notice the history of this particularly bad argument. Justin uses it against the Jews. For several generations Mohammedans in India have

used the Turkish control of Jerusalem as an argument against Christianity. The result of the war offers a great temptation to Christians to revive the use of this weapon, but it is to be hoped that the temptation will be victoriously resisted.) "If all must be circumcised, what of Adam, Noah, Enoch, Melchizedek, who were not? Jesus brings the true circumcision of the heart. What need of the outward fleshly sign of circumcision have I, who have been witnessed to by Christ?"

TRYPHO: "But Daniel vii. and such Scriptures lead us to expect a *glorious* Christ, not one like yours, crucified."

JUSTIN: "You have not understood that there are *two* advents, the first in suffering, the second in *glory*."

TRYPHO: "But do you actually seek to persuade us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, that later he became a man, was crucified, ascended to heaven, will come again, and ought to be worshipped?"

JUSTIN: "I am prepared to prove every word of this from your own Scriptures."

Here begins the main argument in the book, an elaborate use of Scripture texts, often loosely quoted, usually allegorically interpreted, chosen with great skill to prove that there was a divine Being who appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Moses, who is called God, and yet is distinct from Him who made all things. Granted the principles of exegesis which were generally accepted in those days, and given the Septuagint translation, not the Hebrew text, of the

Old Testament, the proof becomes quite an impressive one, and we can understand Trypho saying: "These are perilous thoughts, but you seem to prove them from Scripture." Evidently among Christians there had been developed a great *system* of Old Testament quotations, which Justin used with great skill. Everything in the Old Testament which could by any allegorical method be referred to the Messiah is shown as fulfilled in Jesus, while most things which the Gospels record as happening to Jesus are shown as foretold in the Old Testament. While some parts of the argument are valid to-day as an argument from prophecy, there is certainly much which now we must discard. It served its purpose in its day, and the Jew could not criticize a method which he was constantly using himself. Moreover, at its base was the true fundamental idea that Jesus is the incarnation of an eternal being for whose advent God was always preparing the world. But there lurked in the method one special danger which Justin himself did not wholly escape. The Christ who could be pieced together from fragments of prophecy or from verbal correspondences between the Gospels and the Old Testament was a poor substitute for the rich and living personality depicted in the gospels when simply read as meaning what they say. The living Jesus, who was absolutely *new* in the world, is the substance of the Christian's message, and the argument from prophecy is only valuable when His actual portrait stands ever in the foreground.

Place alongside of the Christian argument with

Jews the modern argument with Mohammedans, and each will throw light upon the other.*

Mohammedans speak of themselves, Jews, and Christians as "people of a book" (Ahli Kitāb). As with the Jew, so with the earnest-minded Mohammedan, any religious appeal must be justified by some passage from the Scripture, and the argument from prophecy has special power. The Christian who would testify to Mohammedans must know his Old Testament, and many passages in it he should learn by heart.

Again, just as the early Christians showed that a purely Unitarian conception of God cannot be the final truth, so the modern Christian can prove to the Mohammedan that in spite of his own claim he is not, nor can he be, a consistent Unitarian. The attitude of devotion and something like adoration taken up towards the prophet himself, still more the common practices of uneducated Mohammedans at the tombs of saints, are indications that the human soul cannot rest permanently satisfied with the worship of a unitary absolute God.

The argument for the Gospel against the Law is essentially the same now as in Justin's day. There is the sharpest possible contrast between the glorious liberty with which Christ sets men free, and the legalistic spirit of Mohammed which regulated the height of trousers above the ankles and the trimming of moustaches.

* See "The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam," *International Review of Missions*, Jan., 1912-April, 1913. Reprinted in book form, Oxford University Press, 1915.

In the early centuries no Christian teaching was more prominent in the presentation of Christianity to non-Christians than the doctrine of the Word. That doctrine has still its part to play, for Islam has its own Logos doctrine, which might be summed up as "The Word became a book," over against our message that "The Word became flesh." It ought not to be too difficult for us to show how much greater is the living Christ than the dead letter of the Korān.

And ever in the foreground, more prominently than it was placed by the ancient Christian writers, must stand the portrait of Jesus in the gospels. The character of Christ attracts Moslems as it attracts all men, especially if His spiritual strength is clearly emphasized. The Mohammedan who worships power needs to discover the "divine energy, exhaustless vigour, and resistless power," in the figure of our Lord. That is an ideal which he can understand, higher than anything he has seen anywhere else, and he will give it his allegiance.

2. *The Argument with the General Public, Then and Now.*

It required no common courage to write to a Roman Emperor a public defence of the Christian religion in the second century. But there were men who took their life in their hands and did it. From their books we can see the Christianity of the time as it was stated to the authorities and the general public. They are commonly called "Apologists," a name which means not that they apologized for

Christianity, but that they defended it. Most of them were philosophers, and one of them (Aristides) quite possibly wrote from Athens, the home of philosophy. Justin Martyr lived the life of the philosopher Christian in the Roman capital itself. The writer of perhaps the most beautiful defence, the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, has set no name to his work. Only one of these earlier defenders so far as we know wrote in Latin, and he was a Roman lawyer (Minucius Felix) who composed a dialogue, after the best Latin classical models, in defence of Christianity. We can see the style in which most of them wrote from the opening paragraph of the Epistle to Diognetus. "Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that thou art exceedingly anxious to understand the religion of the Christians; and that thy enquiries respecting them are distinctly and carefully made, as to what God they trust and how they worship Him, that they all disregard the world and despise death and take no account of those who are regarded as gods by the Greeks, neither observe the superstition of the Jews; and as to the nature of the affection which they entertain one to another, and of this new development or interest, which has entered into men's lives now and not before: I gladly welcome this zeal in thee, and I ask of God, Who supplieth both the speaking and the hearing to us, that it may be granted to myself to speak in such a way that thou mayest be made better by the hearing, and to thee that thou mayest so listen that I the speaker may not be disappointed."*

* Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 503.

No one can read their work without being impressed with their strength, their culture, their Christian devotion, and the cogency of their main arguments. The Christian religion was upheld by them in a spirit which may still serve as a model. But there was a weakness in their method worth noting, that we may avoid it in India.

Christianity as a Philosophy.

They felt themselves under the necessity of presenting their religion to outsiders as though it were a philosophy. Christianity doubtless implies a philosophy, but is first and foremost a life. The Logos conception is their favourite weapon. We must remember that educated men were in those days talking of the Logos as much as in our day they are talking of evolution or of post-war reconstruction. In the handling of this conception the Apologists showed magnificent broad-mindedness. They did not feel compelled as some do to look with a jealous eye upon any wisdom or goodness seen in non-Christian life or literature. For it was all theirs, being all due to the Word. "Whatsoever things have been well said in any men's words belong to us Christians: for we worship and love, next to God, the Word who cometh forth from the unborn and unutterable God, since for our sakes also He hath become man."* Socrates was a Christian, for he lived by Reason (the Logos). But herein lay a snare. This truth needs to be balanced by the corresponding truth that in Jesus Christ there has

* Justin, *Ap.* 2.

come to the world something absolutely new, viz. His own divine-human self, and not merely the clear revelation of things which before Him were dimly and fragmentarily known. The Apologists did not forget that after all the essence of the gospel is that that Word has become flesh and appeared as man. But they did not put as clearly into the foreground as we could have wished the living, breathing figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

Christians not Atheists.

It seems strange to find them obliged seriously to repel the charge of atheism, but it shows us how puzzling the Christian religion must have appeared to outsiders. It was always telling people not to believe in the gods, and it had no visible gods of its own. It must be a club of atheists! The Christian defenders naturally found no difficulty in rebutting this charge, and carried the war into the enemies' country by affirming that the real atheists are those who accept the immoral stories told of most of the Greek gods, since what is not good cannot be divine. They knew the religion which they were attacking, most of them having grown up in it. Therein they differ from many modern writers who perforce must glean from books and external observation their knowledge of the lives of those to whom they are presenting Christ. These men knew how a Greek felt, for they had felt that way themselves until Christ changed them. They sometimes ridiculed their opponents' superstitions, but more often they denounced their shameless immorality.

Christian living the great argument.

Knowing as we do that the Christians were the body of people of all others in that day who were living lives of moral purity, we find it strange that they had to give space to rebutting charges of promiscuous sexual intercourse and of cannibalism. The best answer was simply to set forth the actual life that Christians lived. Here was their strongest weapon, and it always will be the strongest weapon in Christian propaganda. After all, Christianity works; it makes men good. Nothing impresses the outsider so much as that.

“We who formerly delighted in fornication, but now embrace chastity alone; we who formerly used magical arts, dedicate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all.”*

Demand for a fair hearing.

Setting forth all these matters, these men claimed

* Justin, *Ap.* 1.

a fair hearing in the courts. Christians were being punished not for crimes, but for the name Christian. With quite unanswerable reasoning they showed this to be as absurd as it was cruel. But having put their case with all clearness, they calmly told the Emperors that whatever happened they would continue to follow Christ. Think of the cool courage in such words as these, written in the very city of the Emperor and plainly signed. "And if you also read these words in a hostile spirit, you can do no more, as I said before, than to kill us; which indeed does no harm to us, but to you and all who unjustly hate us and do not repent, brings eternal punishment by fire."*

Modern Indian Apologists in Vernacular Literature.

The work of the Apologists still waits to be done in many vernaculars in India. The Indian educated in English is freed from many misconceptions, and has so much literature on Christianity available to him that if he does not understand the religion it is not for want of literary statements of it. But in the villages such strange misconceptions still prevail, such curious libels about Christian habits, Christian institutions, and Christian living are still current, that apologists in the vernaculars have a great task to perform. If they have learnt the lessons of the past, they will be just and generous towards all that is good in non-Christian systems, but they will make it clear that Christ brings to the world a gift quite new, the gift of Himself. The Jesus of history, the living Jesus who ate and drank and taught and

* Justin, *Ap.* 1.

suffered, will stand out always in the forefront of all that they say. And next to the figure of Jesus Himself they will emphasize, as the Apologists emphasized, the miracles which He has wrought in transforming human life. Real as are the faults to be deplored in our Christian Churches, yet when men's pre-Christian and their Christian conditions are fairly compared, the argument from Christian life stands to-day as ever.

The mass-movements are dealing with the lowest classes of society in India, but they too can reinforce the "argument from life." Village caste men who opposed Christianity have said, "We have seen what Christianity has done for the Mālas of our own village. Before they became Christians they were always drinking and quarrelling; they used to poison our cattle and steal our grain. Now they have given up all their evil ways, and the only desire they have is to get their children educated so that they may be fit to go out as teachers." Such testimony counts for more than all the reasonings of learning. Next to pointing men to the living Jesus direct, the most convincing thing that we can do is to point them to lives which He has transformed.

3. *A Detailed Defence of Christianity.*

Towards the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, a Greek Platonist named Celsus wrote a thorough and comprehensive attack on the Christian religion. He was a man of religious temperament, yet full of the Greek contempt for barbarians, and he detested Christianity alike on patriotic, religious, and

philosophical grounds. He named his book *The True Word*, which we are able to a considerable extent to piece together from the full quotations of it made long afterwards by the great Christian teacher Origen in his answer. The first part of Celsus' book consisted of an attack made upon Christianity from the point of view of a Jew, covering comprehensively the same ground as has been described in the first section of this chapter. The second and larger part consists of Celsus' attack in his own person, and much of it is very near to our own controversy with Hindus. This great attack remained unanswered for seventy years, until the learned Origen, then more than sixty years old, was persuaded to answer it. His reply is one of the greatest defences of Christianity ever written, and well worth the study of those who follow in his footsteps in upholding the religion of Christ to-day. The book is lengthy, but the following condensation in dialogue form will give some idea of its main lines of attack and defence, and will show how relevant is Origen's book to the situation in India, where Christianity is frequently attacked by educated men whose philosophy, whose religious upbringing, even whose prejudices, are akin to those of Celsus who wrote in the second century.

CELSUS: *What is true in Christianity is not new or original, but had been better said previously by philosophers; Christianity has not the prestige of antiquity.*

ORIGEN: "The originality of the Christians' dogmas lies in their moral force." As to antiquity,

Christ is not the first manifestation of the deity, but the culminating point in a series of divine manifestations, which has found in Him its consummation. "Nothing beautiful has ever been done among men without the entrance of the Divine Word into the souls of those who were able to receive though only a little of His energy."

CELSUS: *The story of the virgin birth is an incredible fiction covering up a scandal of immorality.*

ORIGEN: If Jesus was, as you allege, the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier and an immoral Jewess, how will you explain that He has shaken the whole world to its foundations? As to the virgin birth being incredible, "Why should there not be a soul which receives a body altogether miraculous, which has something in common with the rest of men that it may be able to live along with them, and something unique that it may continue untouched by sin?"

CELSUS: *What proof is there of Jesus' Divinity? Miracles? Sorcerers in the market-place do those for a few cash. God does not will anything contrary to nature. How can you distinguish Jesus' claims to be divine from those of countless others?*

ORIGEN: There is abundant proof from prophecy. His teaching is such that all fair-minded men recognize in it the voice of God. In the special kind of miracles that He wrought we are forced to see the hand of God. But it is the moral force exercised by Christianity in the world which most clearly proves the divinity of its Founder. The results accomplished by Jesus could not have been brought

about save by divine power. In the work accomplished by Greek gods such as Minos or Perseus there is nothing to compel our assent to the stories about the divinity of their origin. But in Christianity "The eyes of the blind in soul are always being opened, and ears which were deaf to virtue listen with eagerness to the teaching concerning God and the blessed life with Him." It is true, as you say, that God does not will anything "contrary to nature." But "there are some things above nature which God could at any time do; for example, the raising of a man above the nature of a man, and making him a partaker of the divine nature." There is the great miracle of sudden conversion. You may compare the miracles of Christ with other miracle stories, and "If you look to the relative improvement in morals and in piety, you will acknowledge that a divine power was at work in Jesus and not in others."

CELSUS: *Christians have no culture: they say, "Let no man come to us who is learned or wise or prudent; but whoso is stupid or ignorant or boyish, he may come with confidence. The only converts we care to have (or indeed can get) are the silly, the ignoble, and the senseless, the slaves, the women, and the children."*

ORIGEN: It is quite true that the ignorant and unlearned are invited by us, for the Word promises to heal such and make all worthy of God. Moreover, surely these epithets are more fitly applied to those who pray for life to that which is dead.

CELSUS: *Christians have a very suspicious fond-*

ness for sinners. They call the worst people to themselves as if they were forming a robber band. They talk of forgiveness of sins, but if God were to forgive sins He would be grossly unjust.

ORIGEN: We do summon to us the same class of people that a robber summons; but not to the same calling. Our whole Christian case rests upon the change which Christianity makes in the lives of even the worst.

CELSUS: *Christians are supremely ridiculous in the exclusiveness of their claims, like worms in a corner of the dung-hill, crying out "To us God reveals all things, and with us alone He holds intercourse."*

ORIGEN: The human soul is not on a level with the worm, but is of infinite value. This doctrine always tends to appear foolishness to proud and learned people like Celsus, but it lies at the heart of the teaching of Christ.

CELSUS: *Christians believe in the resurrection of the body—a hope fit for worms.*

ORIGEN: "We do not say that the corrupted body will return to its original state, for the corrupted grain of corn does not return to its original state. But we say that as in the case of the grain of corn a stalk arises, so a certain principle of relation is implanted in the body, and that from this, which is not corrupted, the body will rise in incorruption."

CELSUS: *The Christians' theory of incarnation is impossible, for it involves change in the unchangeable nature of God, and material flesh would soil the spirit of God. And why should incarnation happen*

in that particular time and place, why not before, and in a nobler race?

ORIGEN: You cannot understand the truth of incarnation because of your fundamental error in supposing matter to be essentially evil. It is not the body which is the seat of evil, but the mind and its actions, "and, according to us, to speak accurately, nothing else is evil." As to the circumstances of the incarnation, place and race were specially prepared for the event, and the incarnation took place "in the fulness of time."

CELSUS: *The Christians' language about God is childishly anthropomorphic, expressing an inferior conception of God. God is self-contained, passionless, and far above the world.*

ORIGEN: Some of the Christian language is anthropomorphic, being the language of a teacher to young children. The Word of God adapts His message to the capacity of the hearers.

CELSUS: *The Christians foolishly attack our worship of idols as if we identified the idols with God, whereas we know as well as do the Christians that they are things dedicated to, and statues of, God. Christians boast of how they can insult the idols with impunity, and they turn that into an argument. But did your Jesus do anything when He was insulted?*

ORIGEN: We do not approve of reviling of images. "Abuse of any kind, even when naturally evoked by injustice, is foreign to the spirit of Christianity, and to abuse mere lifeless images is silliness. But our statues are not made by worthless artisans,

but are fashioned in us by the word of God. These statues are the virtues which are imitations of the First-born of every creature, in whom are the ideals of all the virtues. And just as there is great difference in the fashioning of images and statues, as some are wonderfully perfect, like the statues of Phidias and Polycleitus, so is it with the making of spiritual statues. . . . But surpassing all in the whole creation is the image in the Saviour who said, "The Father in me."

CELSUS: *The Gospels are untrustworthy, their narratives incredible, their style and language beneath contempt.*

ORIGEN: "It is abundantly clear to all men of intelligence that the good faith of the writers, joined, so to speak, to their great simplicity, received a diviner virtue which has accomplished far more than it seemed possible to accomplish by Greek rhetoric with its graceful diction, its elaborate style, its logical divisions and systematic order."

CELSUS: *Christians are unpatriotic, caring nothing for the Empire. "Help the Emperor with all your might, share his labours in righteous fashion, fight for him, march with him to the field, take your share in the government of your fatherland, and do this for the preservation of the law and of piety."*

ORIGEN: Christians are true and loyal benefactors of their country, since they train men in piety towards God, and induce them to be faithful as citizens here by inspiring them with the hope of a heavenly citizenship. Save in this indirect way, Christians take no part in political life.

CELSUS: *Why should Christians make such a fuss about a difference of name for Deity, since all names cover the same reality?*

ORIGEN: A Christian will die rather than call God Zeus, because that name is associated in the minds of men with shameful deeds. But "appellatives may be used of God in every language, and He hears them all." On the other hand, proper names have in them some mysterious force.

As even this bare summary will indicate, most of this argument might have taken place in Madras or the Punjab instead of in Alexandria. How familiar in India is the reproach that Christianity has only been able to win over the outcastes, the women and children! We answer not less boldly than Origen. It is an essential mark of the religion of Christ to seek out the lowliest and the lost. And when the broad results of the mass-movements are measured up, and the moral achievements for the outcastes fairly weighed, we too can show traces of the working of a power which must be divine.

Notice the unerring instinct which makes Origen point out that the root error of Greek, which is also that of Hindu, thought is the idea of the evil of matter, and how near he comes to the language of modern philosophy which says that there is nothing good but a good will, as there is nothing evil but an evil will.

We can be bolder than Origen in defending the Christian language about God. We have the conception of a gradual revelation, explaining some of

the Old Testament statements which to Celsus appeared so shocking. Moreover we are less impressed than the people of those times with philosophical terms which are all negative or abstract; we know that we can express the most essential truth about God in frankly personal language.

Especially practical in its suggestiveness is Origen's reply concerning idolatry. Abuse of idols is futile; but it can be shown that human lives far better than any marble can set forth the love, spirituality, purity of God. But statues are not all perfect, as every sculptor is not a Phidias. The one perfect statue of the very reality of the Eternal is the human life of Him who more than once in the New Testament is styled the Image of God.

Very remarkable is it to read at the end of Celsus' book the appeal for the patriotic co-operation of Christians, written near the time when, at any rate in Gaul, Christians were being tortured to death in the name of the welfare of the Empire. But one of the great wars with the barbarians was going on, and even Christians were to be rallied to save their country from invasion. Christians in India can respond to such an appeal with greater confidence than could those of Origen's time, when the question whether a Christian could lawfully participate in public affairs was still a matter of debate. In India affairs of state are not entangled with polytheistic religion, as they were in the Roman Empire. It is clear now that, provided the motive be right, a Christian can do unselfish service to God and country in almost any sphere—in municipal life, in imperial

politics, in any of the professions. Only he must be sure in his own heart that he is in the place where God has put him. India has everything to gain from the contribution which Christian men with such a sense of God can make to her corporate life.

Origen's main line of defence is as strong to-day as ever. Christianity is the final religion, because it brings man into fellowship with God, not in idea but in fact. It does it by proclaiming the Divine Man, whose figure is central and determinative for all Origen's thought and life. The sure defence of the Christian religion is to set forth Christ Himself. And second only to the emphasis on Christ Himself is the emphasis on the moral results of faith in Christ. That faith changes men as does nothing else in the world, and the power that makes bad men good must come from a divine source. Next to the character of Jesus Christ Himself, the life transformed by faith in Him is the most effective apology.

4. *Two attitudes to pre-Christian thought.*

St. Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews alike showed the Old Testament dispensation as a divinely ordained preparation for the New. The one found that law had been the "pedagogue" to bring us to Christ, like the slave who took the boy by the hand and led him to his teacher; the other found in the whole Mosaic system the antitype and shadow of what was to come. Yet we can discern very different tendencies in the kind of emphasis used by

these writers. St. Paul is thinking of "the law" as a legal code making ethical demands which ultimately are impossible for unaided man to fulfil. The writer to the Hebrews is thinking of "the law" as a system of worship, and a series of sacred institutions growing up around that worship. Consequently St. Paul sets law and gospel in sharp contrast, while the writer to the Hebrews shows the gospel rather as the spiritual fulfilment or inner reality of the law. St. Paul thought of the law as an inexorable task-master from whom the Christian was delivered. To the Christian the law was dead. "Ye are no longer under law." The writer to the Hebrews felt that in Christianity the institutions of Judaism lived on gloriously transformed. "He makes it his aim to show that every name, every institution, every privilege which had existed under the old economy, survived in the new, but invested with a higher meaning and a truer glory."*

There is room for both kinds of emphasis to bring out the whole truth. Doubtless some Jewish Christians were helped by the thoughts of the Epistle to the Hebrews who would have found it difficult to follow St. Paul. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. And yet in fulfilling He made vital changes which sometimes can be most clearly shown by contrasting the old with the new.

In general far more Christians seem to have followed the writer to the Hebrews than St. Paul. The first few generations of Christians had mainly

* Marcus Dods, *Expositor's Greek Testament*.

the Old Testament as their Bible. Most of them were more conscious of their continuity with Judaism than of their differences from it. They would have had a stronger spiritual life had they absorbed more of St. Paul's teaching concerning the vital difference between law and grace, the old and the new.

The problem as to which was the right attitude became much more complex when Christianity encountered pagan systems. There was no study of the history of religion to enable Christians to look at non-Christian religious phenomena with the detached attitude of the scientist. A great deal of the paganism of the period was coarse and immoral, a potent cause of the terrible corruption of the manners and customs of ordinary society at the period. Naturally some Christian converts desired to forget all about their pre-Christian habits, to think of the surrounding paganism with fierce hostility, and to live as far as possible in a separate world, only remembering from time to time in humility the Apostle's reminder "and such were some of you" (I Cor. vi. 11). But there were others who remembered enough of good in the old religion to realize that with all its faults it represented the only religious preparation for the gospel which had once been available, a preparation which could not have been given without the divine Providence. They thought of the Word illuminating all men, and saw His work in anything beautiful or true. Sometimes an old Greek myth could serve as vehicle for a Christian meaning. No less firmly than others they could denounce the immoralities of the old, but the best

of the old seemed to them a fable whose ultimate meaning must be sought in the truth of Christ.

Again we can say that both were right. Some realized the greatness of their salvation best in sharp contrast with what had gone before. Yet surely the richer measure of truth was theirs who could discern in pre-Christian thought some rays of divine truth whose source was in the Sun of Righteousness. Provided they never forgot that that which saves men is that "the Word became flesh" in the historic Jesus, they were happier who could trace his operations over the wider range, even beyond the bounds of the Christian religion, "lighting every man, coming into the world" (John i. 9, R.V.). What is more important, they were better equipped for Christian propaganda. With hearts beating in sympathy with the best Greek religious thought, they could communicate Gospel truth in a language which the best Greeks easily understood. Continual denunciation merely provokes; the Christian spirit of love is best understood when it manifests itself in appreciation of all truth, goodness, and beauty, wherever found.

Typical representatives of these two schools are Tertullian of Carthage and Clement of Alexandria. Tertullian is the fierce controversialist, scoring powerful points, denouncing wickedness, sometimes making his opponent writhe under ridicule and sarcasm. Clement is the Greek scholar who loves the ancient literature so well that he can scarcely write two sentences without quoting from it. In the Catechetical School at Alexandria, over,

which he presided, Greek thought was carefully studied and appreciated, and the partial light vouchsafed to Plato or Aristotle was shown to be an earnest of the "Dayspring from on high." Imagine how different must have been the effect made upon pagan readers by two such passages as the following. Tertullian in the full flow of fervid and eloquent argument in defence of the Christians, writes :

"True, your Gods do not feel the injuries and insults attendant upon their manufacture any more than they perceive the devotion you render them. 'O impious words! O sacrilegious abuse!' Yes, gnash your teeth and foam with rage! You are the same persons who approve of a Seneca inveighing against your superstition at greater length and more bitterly. If, therefore, we do not worship statues and cold images, the very facsimiles of their dead originals, which the kites and mice and spiders have an accurate knowledge of, do we not deserve praise rather than punishment for our repudiation of a recognized error?"

The words would make their effect by being so red-hot, but Clement found a more excellent way in his *Exhortation to the Greeks*. He turned to account the old legends of Orpheus and Eunomus, who sang the songs which charmed beasts and serpents, trees, and stones. This tale, said Clement, is true of our new Orpheus Christ; for though men were more rapacious than wolves, more cunning

than serpents, more senseless than stocks and stones, our new Orpheus has sung a song which has utterly tamed them and drawn them after Him. "See how mighty is the new song! It has made men out of stones and men out of wild beasts."* The theme of the new song is the coming of Christ to earth to reveal God, to stay corruption, to conquer death, and to reconcile disobedient sons to their Father. Clement does not shrink from condemnation of real abominations in the Greek religion, but he uses its religious language for conveying the essential truth of the Christian Gospel with a winsomeness which must have been powerful to attract. Every Greek who read his book must have felt at home with it. Here was the Greek style, Greek genius, Greek literary allusions with nothing foreign or barbarous, yet here was truth new and alluring.

The Indian Church has its Tertullians and its Clements. Some feel that everything Hindu must be avoided as a taint, and find almost a malicious joy in denouncing the evils of "heathenism." Others remember with affection old stories which can carry an effective Christian message, and the old devotional songs which can best express their feeling towards their Saviour Christ. All have to bear in mind that in India too the Word enlightened men, and that India's age-long hunger after oneness with God was no unworthy preparation for the new message about Christ. Such criticism or denunciation as may be necessary can itself only be effective when spoken in the spirit of love. Then

* *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Ch. I.

it falls into its proper subordinate place among the whole message that wins the heart. The call of Christ still sounds in Hindu ears as a voice that is foreign and barbarous. The Church which He founded looks like a Western structure. Its customs, its pictures, its music, its theological terms, seem all to have originated in Europe or America. It is hard to remember that they all grew out of a life lived in the East. It will be so until there are more men and women in India whose pulses thrill responsive to all that is best in her ancient past, with a love second only to the passionate self-abandonment of trust and love which draws them to the feet of the Lord of East as well as of West. It is not a question of adapting Christ to suit Hindu prejudices, which would be to bear false witness. For European or Indian there can be only one Christ, the historical divine-human Jesus of Nazareth, and one attitude of devotion and self-surrender to Him. There can be no tampering with facts to make an Indian Gospel. But true Indian bhakti towards that same Jesus Christ will find Indian ways of expressing itself, will create customs whose appearance may be half Hindu, but whose meaning is wholly Christian, and will give rise to activities more akin to the brooding spirit of the East than to the bustling energy of the West. Then for the first time the eyes of the multitudes of India's people will see clear the vision of the Saviour.

That is why India needs many Clements, men with Clement's gifts of thought and of religious

emotion, and with his faculty for making non-Christian language convey to non-Christian hearts the clear call of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST.

IT was by suffering that Christianity won its way to supremacy in the ancient world. We read the story that we may know the price that was paid in human pain for the transmission of this religion to us, and that we may catch the stimulus of noble examples. Sometimes details of the martyrdoms have been dwelt on in a way that is morbid, as in some devotional books widely read in the middle ages. While avoiding this temptation we ought to read some of the records which tell how heroic Christianity overcame fiendish cruelty by its strength to endure.

1. *The Cross of Perpetual Insecurity.*

Christians were not always being hunted down. For long periods and in many places they were undisturbed, sometimes throughout the whole Empire, as, for instance, in the "long peace" from 260-303. But at most times and in most places they lived in an uncertainty which must have been peculiarly hard to bear. This is not the place to explain why Christians appeared to many of the rulers as enemies of the State, why slanderous stories of shameful practices circulated everywhere about them, or why any sudden calamity was ascribed by

the mob to their baneful influence. Nor need the painful story here be told of the various methods used for the suppression of the Christians under Nero or Domitian, Trajan or Severus, Decius or Diocletian. The outstanding fact is that for two and a half centuries the cross which every Christian had to bear was not perpetual persecution, but the knowledge that any day the worst cruelty and lust of a brutal age might be let loose upon him, as from time to time it had been let loose upon Christians in the past. What this meant to sensitive natures can hardly be estimated, but we see traces of its effects in the writings of such men as Justin or Tertullian. Tertullian seems to have been an eye-witness of scenes which burnt themselves into his brain and which were never far from his thoughts. He lived, as lived many a Christian of his day, in the continual consciousness that insult, nakedness, torture, and death might at any moment of popular outbreak be his portion. That was one of the influences which shaped him and which must be borne in mind when we are inclined to criticize Tertullian as an intolerant and red-hot extremist. The strain of fanaticism in the early Christians is not so wonderful as their steadfast courage.

2. *Typical Scenes.*

Let us try to picture a few events typical of many.

(a) *Bithynia.*

It is the year 112. The Emperor's intimate friend Pliny, the new Governor of Bithynia, shocked to discover throughout his province ramifications of

"perverse and excessive superstitions" hitherto unknown to him, has been dealing summarily with the Christians. Those who confessed themselves have been three times questioned and if they persevered led away to execution. Others who say they were once Christians but have given it up have, in Pliny's presence, called on the gods, offered incense and wine before the Emperor's statue, and reviled Christ. These may be set free, but their account of what they formerly did as Christians greatly puzzles the Governor in its lack of any abominations. "They had been accustomed," writes Pliny afterwards, "on an appointed day to assemble before dawn to sing antiphonally to Christ as to a god; and to bind themselves by an oath, not for a criminal purpose, but never to commit theft or robbery or adultery, nor to break their word, nor to refuse a deposit when called upon to restore it; and, this accomplished, it had been their habit to separate and meet together again to partake in common of a harmless meal, but they had ceased to do this after my edict." Surely they must be concealing something. Pliny is determined to get at the truth somehow or other. Two women stand there whom the Christians call deaconesses, but they are only slaves. "Put them on the rack," says the Governor. So the limbs of two poor faithful are strained, two of the great army of women who from first to last suffered in their bodies for Christ. But no revelation of hideous doings falls from their lips, and Pliny has to write to the Emperor a puzzled letter which has been well called the first apology

for Christianity, from its clear testimony to the innocence of the lives which the Christians led.

(b) *Ignatius' Journey.*

Not very long after this there passed through Asia Minor and Macedonia an escort party of ten Roman soldiers in charge of a notable prisoner who was young and strong and of lowly birth, for he had been sentenced to death by wild beasts in the great amphitheatre at Rome. But he was held in high honour by the Christians, for he was Ignatius, Bishop of the great Church in Antioch. We see him on the way receiving deputations from Churches, writing long letters and despatching messengers, sometimes accompanied by friends for many miles of his journey. Some of those letters have come down to us, and portray a man living at a white heat of intense emotion. He is full of passionate longing for martyrdom. Moment by moment he sees vividly before his mind the scene in the amphitheatre; the arena, the pitiless gazing multitude, the spring of the lion, and the rending of his victim. This suffering he feels will make all his experience of Christ more real. "Now," he says, "I begin to be a disciple. He who is near to the sword is near to God. He who is among wild beasts is in company with God." His chains are "a necklace of jewels to adorn him," and he dreads nothing so much as the possibility of his being released after all. Withal he is an intensely humble man. When speaking of his own Church at Antioch he constantly uses words such as these: "I am ashamed to be counted one of them. For indeed I am not

worthy of being the very least of them, and one born out of due time."

So he passes on to Rome, leaving a line of light in the Churches behind him, and one day in the vast Flavian amphitheatre, which we now know as the Colosseum, the crowd is gratified to learn that among the victims thrown to the beasts is a man of some distinction among the people called Christians.

(c) Lyons and Vienne.

We pass to the year 177, and to the province of Gaul along the Rhone. There has been an anti-Christian mob outbreak. Houses have been plundered, and many Christians thrown into prison to await the governor's arrival for their trial. Some slaves under torture are said to have confessed that Christians perpetrate vile abominations, so no cruelties are felt to be severe enough to inflict upon them. Vettius Epagathus offers to plead, but is promptly added to the number of prisoners. One of the Christians in prison named Alcibiades has been an ascetic, living on only bread and water, and in confinement he wishes to continue his habit. But Attalus, another Christian, receives a revelation that it is not well to decline to use the creatures of God, and with a beautiful freedom from spiritual pride, Alcibiades begins to partake of all things and gives thanks to God. The first batch of martyrs suffers trial and torture, and ten relapse, but these are not released. Foremost among those who endure are Sanctus the deacon, Maturus a new convert, Attalus of Pergamus, and Blandina a slave girl, for there is no class

distinction among Christians suffering for their faith. Blandina's Christian mistress has feared lest the girl should give way, but from morning till night Blandina endures tortures till the executioners can think of nothing fresh to do to her. After the first public trial there follow many long days in the stocks in a dark prison, where the aged Bishop Pothinus dies. Some of the Christians who are Roman citizens appeal to Cæsar, the philosopher Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His reply is clear; Roman citizens are to be beheaded, renegades to be set free, the rest thrown to the beasts. There follows another exhibition in the amphitheatre, with ghastly tortures inflicted before the prisoners are thrown to the beasts. The frail slave-girl survives unshaken to the last, and in the words of the moving letter written by the Church, "she like a noble mother who had cheered on her children, and sent them victorious to their king . . . hastened to them with joy and exultation as though they were bidden to a marriage feast, and not condemned to be cast to wild beasts."

3. *Failures of Courage.*

But the Christians of the first three centuries were not all heroes of the faith. Strange scenes were witnessed in the year 250, when after a peace for the Church, which in most places had lasted for thirty years, there fell like a thunderbolt the edict of Decius that every person in the Empire must appear on a fixed day with a crown on the head, to join in offering the prescribed sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods for victory over the Goths and for an abundant

harvest. Systematically the officers of Government went through lists of the names of citizens, not excluding women and boys, to compel everyone to sacrifice. Many of the leaders of the Church were added to the noble army of martyrs, but thousands found that their courage failed them. Some boldly and firmly denied that they were, or ever had been, Christians. Others sacrificed with pale faces and trembling hands amid the jeers of the crowd which knew their past. Still others bribed corrupt officials to grant them false certificates of having sacrificed; a few specimens of those sorry documents still exist. But the fire of the furnace left a smaller Church of purer gold. In spite of the surrender of thousands, the total result of the persecution was a demonstration of the moral power of the religion of Christ. Within a year Decius had to leave Rome for a campaign against the Goths, from which he never returned, and the fact that the persecution of the Christians at once died down shows that public opinion was not really behind it. Most men were coming to know that Christians were not the vile people their calumniators said they were.

4. *Impression upon Non-Christians.*

Of course, those who saw them suffer were not all impressed in the same way, but even their worst enemies were greatly puzzled. The satirist, Lucian, who seems to have himself witnessed a persecution, got the impression that Christians were very gullible and very harmless people, led astray by the preposterous notion of personal immortality. "For the

poor wretches have convinced themselves that they will be absolutely immortal, and live for ever, and in consideration of this they despise death, and commonly offer themselves of their own accord for martyrdom; and besides this their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brethren when once they have transgressed and denied the gods of Greece, and pay worship to their crucified sophist, and live according to His laws." A different type of man was the soldier Basilides, who in Alexandria had to lead forth the beautiful Potamiæna to an agonizing death, and under the influence of what he saw became a Christian and a martyr himself, soon to be followed by others also. Again in Eumeneæ, when two Christian men were being crucified, a woman, Agathonice, rushed forward and laid herself on a cross to be nailed next. And as we read the most exquisite of all the martyr records, the story of the death in Africa in 203 of Perpetua and Felicitas, written up to the last hours by Perpetua herself, and probably finished by Tertullian; as we read in the light of it many a burning word in Tertullian's other writings, we know that one of the chief things which brought that stern lawyer to the religion of Christ was what he had seen of how Christians suffered. He was uttering his own experience as well as a general truth when he wrote that "The blood of the Christians is seed."

5. *The Final Victory.*

At the beginning of the fourth century one more deluge of suffering swept over the Church in the last

general persecution under Diocletian. In the East the cruelties were worse than ever; the lowest side of paganism made its final frontal attack on Christian endurance, and part of the story will scarcely bear telling. Again there were some who apostatized, and some who compromised, but the mass of Christians simply wore out the persecution by their endurance. The edict of Milan in 313 "that every one of those who are agreed in desiring to observe the Christian religion shall observe the same without any trouble or annoyance" signalized an amazing victory of suffering over cruelty, and inaugurated a new era in the history of the world. No wonder the young deacon Athanasius, who had lived in youth and early manhood through some of the worst horrors of the persecution, felt that the world had become new, and wrote as if he sang in exultation: "The powers of sin are overthrown. The old fear of death is gone. Our children tread it underfoot, our women mock at it. . . . Heathenism is fallen, the wisdom of the world is turned to folly, the oracles are dumb, the demons are confounded. The works of Christ are more in number than the sea, his victories are countless as the waves, his presence is brighter than the sunlight."

6. *Suffering for Christ in India.*

India has had her Christian martyrs, though for the most part their stories are little known. In the Indian Mutiny there were Christians who died rather than abandon their faith. The social systems of India are as inevitably opposed to Christianity as

were the State systems of Rome, with the consequence that many a convert from the higher castes has lost his life. It is less dramatic to be done to death by a secret poison mixed with food than to be slain before vast crowds in an amphitheatre, but it is martyrdom as true. It is trying to be constantly passed over when promotions are being made in one's office, but it occasionally happens to Christian men, and not because of their incapacity. It is hard to be a pāriah sent to prison ostensibly for sheep-stealing, but really for joining the foreign mission. Suffering enough is being endured in quiet ways even now to prevent the Church in India from growing entirely slack. The future is hidden from our eyes, but there are men of experience who hold that the Church should prepare herself for periods of popular disfavour, and perhaps of active persecution before many years have passed away. The conviction may here be set down that if such days come again, while there will be numerous failures, as there were long ago, there will also be joyful surprises in the bearing of Christians now considered unsatisfactory, and most will not hesitate to die rather than forsake their Lord. No country has exalted the passive virtues more than India, and the spirit of Christ joined to the spirit of India's past should produce the stuff of which martyrs are made. Should such dark days befall her, the Church of India may hear from the ancient stories a full choir of witnesses that suffering is one of the divine ways of the propagation of spiritual life. For her, too, will come the day when some Indian Athanasius will rejoice in the

fall of all evil powers, through the victories of Christ more numerous than the waves, and His presence brighter than the sunlight.

CHAPTER VI.

GLIMPSES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE.

EVERY authentic document from the early centuries serves as a window through which we can look into the lives led by Christian people long ago. This chapter tries to call attention to a few of the things which thus we see.

I. *Early Christian Bhakti (The Odes of Solomon).*

Except for a few good Christian lyrics, Christian piety in India has hitherto mostly expressed itself in forms borrowed either from the Bible or from Church services which have come from the West, and this has contributed to the unnecessarily Western appearance of Christianity. For that reason there is a special interest in a book of Christian Psalms recently discovered by Dr. Rendel Harris, in which we see how a Christian Jew of the sub-Apostolic age, living, perhaps, in the last quarter of the first century, gave voice to the devotion of his heart. These Psalms, called "The Odes of Solomon," date back from that early time when a Jewish Christian still felt it necessary to defend the admission of Gentiles into the Church. In Ode 10 Christ or His Church is the speaker, and says almost with a note of apology, "The Gentiles were gathered together who were scattered abroad. And

I was unpolluted by my love. . . . They became my people for ever and ever."

Whoever reads these fervent spiritual songs knows what we sometimes forget, that Christian devotion is no specially European product. There is more of the East than of the West in the imagery used in such praises as the following:—

"I became like the land which blossoms and rejoices in its fruits, and the Lord was like the sun shining on the face of the land; He lightened my eyes and my face received the dew; and my nostrils enjoyed the pleasant odour of the Lord." (Ode 11.)

"As the wings of doves over their nestlings; and the mouth of their nestlings toward their mouths, so also are the wings of the Spirit over my heart; my heart is delighted and exults; like the babe who leaps in the womb of his mother; I believed, therefore I was at rest: for faithful is He in whom I have believed; He hath richly blessed me and my head is with Him; and the sword shall not divide me from Him, nor the scimitar." (Ode 28.)

"As the honey distils from the comb of the bees, and the milk flows from the woman that loves her children, so also is my hope on Thee, my God. As the fountain gushes out its water, so my heart gushes out the praise of the Lord, and my lips utter praise to Him, and my tongue His psalms." (Ode 40.)

More wonderful than the imagery is the sustained note of joy in the Lord. Every psalm ends with "Hallelujah," and the end is in harmony with each sentence. Never is there a trace of that pathetic occasional reaction from faith to uncertainty, from

ecstasy to despair, which is so familiar in Hindu devotional literature. Here is a religious experience which sings in the sunlight of God's love. Its ruling motive is the grateful sense of what God has done in Christ. "The greatness of His kindness hath humbled me. He became like me, in order that I might receive Him; He was reckoned like myself in order that I might put Him on. They who make songs shall sing the grace of the Lord Most High, and they shall bring their songs, and their heart shall be like the day, and like the excellent beauty of the Lord their pleasant song." (Ode 7.) "Thou hast given us Thy fellowship; it was not that Thou wast in need of us, but that we are in need of Thee. Distil Thy dew upon us and open Thy rich fountains that pour forth to us milk and honey." This is true *bhakti* literature, but the *bhakti* is Christian.

The *bhakti* literature of Hinduism, with such psalms as those of the Marāṭha Vaishnavites or the Tamil Saivites, has played a noble part in the spiritual life of India. The best piety in those psalms will be heightened, not lost, when India opens her long hungry heart to the Christ who came not to destroy but to fulfil. All their intensity of devotion, all their indefinable charm of Eastern self-expression, will find increased scope in working upon a worthier subject. The Marāṭha Christāyan of the late N. V. Tilak and the Tamil Rakshanya Yāttiriham of the late Kṛishnan Pillay give a foretaste of what we may look for. The self-abandoning love which has poured itself out so lavishly before some imper-

fect representation of deity will not be destroyed but set free, in adoration of the Perfect Man. It will be a stronger, wiser, purer love, when it is the heart's response to the God whose prior and perfect love is seen in the Cross of Christ. Then instead of borrowing hymns from the West, Indian Christianity will sing such praises as may kindle the fervour of Christ's devotees wherever His name is known.

2. *Care for distant Churches.*

Imagine that instead of giving a list of various Churches and Missions we could naturally and simply speak of the "Church in Calcutta" or the "Church in Madras." Suppose again that dangerous disorders have broken out in the "Church in Calcutta," threatening all ordered life and all spiritual efficiency. Suppose that at the same time "the Church in Madras" is passing through the fiery trial of persecution, and some of its members, men and women, have gone through bloodshed and torture into the glory of their Lord. It requires some slight effort to imagine finally that instead of being preoccupied with its own dangers and losses, "the Church in Madras" meets together in deep concern about "the Church in Calcutta," arranges for a long letter to be written to that Church in its name, and sends three special messengers to convey the letter and report the result of it on their return. That is approximately the state of affairs reflected in the noble writing known as the first Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. Clement wrote it, but entirely as a Church Secretary writes in

the name of his Church. The Christians at Corinth were being divided by a feud, and had unlawfully deposed their presbyters. The Church at Rome was undergoing cruel persecution under Domitian in the year A.D. 95. But it could not leave the Church at Corinth to fall to pieces in faction, so without any undue interference or assumption of authority it took action which must have gone far to put matters right, though we have no information about the result. So one day a large house in Corinth was filled with Christian brethren gathered to listen to Clement's letter as once they had listened to shorter letters from St. Paul. Some passages in the letter throw light on what a Church in those days could be at its best. Reminding the Corinthians of what had been before the present trouble, the writer tells how they had cared for each other. "Ye had conflict day and night for all the brotherhood. . . . Ye were sincere and simple and free from malice one towards another.

. . . . Ye mourned over the transgressions of your neighbours: ye judged their transgressions to be your own." That was part of the hall-mark of early Church life; to lose it would be fatal. "Who, therefore, is noble among you? Who is compassionate? Who is fulfilled with love? Let him say: If by reason of me there be faction and strife and divisions, I retire, I depart whither ye will, and I do that which is ordered by the people: only let the flock of Christ be at peace with its duly appointed presbyters. He that shall have done this, shall win for himself great renown in Christ, and every place will receive him." Very startling is the statement made in passing that

Christians have actually been known to sell themselves into slavery in order to help others. "We know that many among ourselves have delivered themselves into bondage, that they might ransom others. Many have sold themselves into slavery, and receiving the price paid for themselves have fed others."

A beautiful example is given of the kind of prayer which the Church used to offer up, with these words in the midst of it:—"Save those among us who are in tribulation; have mercy on the lowly; lift up the fallen; show Thyself unto the needy; heal the ungodly; release our prisoners; raise up the weak; comfort the faint-hearted. Let all the Gentiles know that Thou art God alone, and Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and we are Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture." And through the whole letter, which fills thirty ordinary close-printed pages, there pulses a religious life of equal elevation and forcefulness.

The author's longing for order in the Church at Corinth is rooted in his reverent sense of the order in God's created handiwork. His exhortations to love are, in the true Pauline way, based on the sense of the love which the Master has shown in His death for us all. There was as yet no fixed New Testament Canon, but this letter contains abundant evidence that the Holy Spirit was guiding the Church aright. It deserves to be read and pondered in India, where the Church of Christ lies as seriously exposed to the danger of faction as anywhere else in the world.

3. *The Commonplace Man who Became a Prophet (Hermas).*

A slave named Hermas gained his freedom, and seems to have kept a shop, where business pressure made him no more truthful than other shopkeepers. Nor was he quite free from other more fleshly weakness. He was married and had children, but his home was utterly unhappy. His wife was notorious for evil speaking; his children out of sheer greed for his property denounced him to the authorities as a Christian. His property was confiscated, and he was reduced to poverty, but the children gained nothing save the reward for denouncing him, which they soon squandered. Such was the commonplace man who after all these troubles attained in penitence the gift of seeing visions and prophesying. Probably we must think of him as one of the "prophets" whose function is referred to in the New Testament. He became a kind of Christian yogi, who fasted much, and occasionally fell into a trance, in which he saw things which he felt were given him for the Church, and which he wrote down in a book called *The Shepherd*, between A.D. 110 and 140. It is in three parts: first Visions, second Mandates or Commandments, and third Similitudes or Parables. It has been called the Pilgrim's Progress of the early Church, and narrowly escaped becoming part of our Christian Bible. In the Visions an aged lady who is the Church tells him many things, growing younger and fairer in each vision as Hermas more truly repents of his sins. The twelve Mandates are exhortations on Christian duty, spoken to Hermas by the

Shepherd, who is explained to be the Angel of Repentance. The Similitudes are a striking series of parables. Repentance and confession is the constantly recurring theme. Hermas is an important man in the Christian community, yet before the whole Church he publicly acknowledges his sins, and with a moral earnestness born of painful private experience insistently calls on his fellow Christians to repent. He harps too continually upon the minor chord of confession, so that in one passage he is told to stop confessing his sins and to go on to pray for righteousness. His besetting weakness is double-mindedness, the hesitating, wavering spirit of timidity, that destroys faith and depresses the spiritual life. Christianity, he is told, is a cheerful religion. "The spirit of God endureth not sadness, neither constraint. Therefore clothe thyself in cheerfulness, which hath favour with God always and is acceptable to Him, and rejoice in it." The ideal set before him is the joyful whole-heartedness that can gladly take all risks with Christ. But Hermas is so obsessed with the thought of punishment that he does not enter into the full freedom of the gospel. His Christianity is of the kind only too often represented to-day in India, a new law, stricter than that of Moses. He has even his own theory of mortification of the flesh, in which the man who fasts is gaining for himself abundant glory, just as the man who is self-indulgent is laying up for himself an exactly proportioned store of pain. Seeds are here which later sprang up in a whole harvest of ideas concerning merit and purgatory.

But the most notable thing in the book is its revelation of the power of Christ upon a common life. We see an average, faulty, timid man being slowly transformed into a character good and glad and strong; a hesitating spirit learning to be wholehearted and fearless through the indwelling spirit of Christ. Hermas has his counterparts in India, as in all lands—ordinary weak men who stay too long at the level of miserably confessing “we are but wretched worms and insects in Thy sight.” His legalistic views of religion are sometimes echoed among us, and the idea of merit is too firmly rooted in India for us to escape from it with ease. But the Spirit which transformed him is ours, and men can see visions still.

4. *Christians as the Soul of the World (The Epistle to Diognetus).*

In a non-Christian country what is the ideal relationship of the Christian to the society round about him? Should he be as detached from it as possible, making even his manner of dressing, or the way in which he cuts his hair, his little tricks of speech, or the pronunciation of his name, a continual reminder that he belongs to a community apart? Are these things necessary if he is to be faithful to his colours, letting all the world everywhere know that he is a Christian? If these things are not necessary, if in all externals he is to be just like the non-Christians around him, how will the real inward difference of his spirit find expression? These are real and practical problems which every Christian has to work out

in terms of his own particular environment. But the ideal for us to strive after has perhaps never been more clearly set forth than by some unknown writer in the second century in his *Epistle to Diognetus*. His words are too good to be condensed or paraphrased :

“For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence of study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvellous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men, and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all

men, and they are persecuted by all. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things. . . .

“In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world. The soul hath its abode in the body, and yet it is not of the body. So Christians have their abode in the world, and yet they are not of the world. The soul, which is invisible, is guarded in the body which is visible: so Christians are recognized as being in the world, and yet the religion remaineth invisible. The flesh hateth the soul, and wageth war with it, though it receiveth no wrong, because it is forbidden to indulge in pleasures; so the world hateth Christians, though it receiveth no wrong from them, because they set themselves against its pleasures. The soul loveth the flesh which hateth it, and the members: so Christians love those that hate them.”

Could we imagine a better ideal for Christians in relation to the new India which is coming into being?

Not to form a separated community, or an isolated religious caste, but to permeate the life of India as its real soul, that is the call that comes to us across seventeen centuries of time.

5. *The Reconciliation of Faith and Culture.* (*Clement of Alexandria.*)

We are saved by faith, not by knowledge. In a country such as Greece or India, where philosophy has caused an over-estimation of knowledge, Christianity in its beginnings is by reaction likely to try

to right the balance by a suspicious attitude towards the intellect. The early Church, after its experiences with Gnosticism, had good reason for being careful about what was called knowledge, for it had led many Christians away from faith. It would not have been surprising had the Church repudiated knowledge altogether, yet it would have done so to its permanent loss, since fearless pursuit of truth in every form is one of the fruits of faith in the God of truth. That faith is like a childless wife until it has had both knowledge and works for offspring. Not only would the ancient Church have suffered impoverishment in its own life, but it would have weakened its own power of missionary appeal to men of intellect outside the Church, who knew in their own experience that knowledge was a jewel not to be lightly thrown away. In such a university centre as Alexandria a Christianity which could find no proper place for knowledge would have lost most of its power to attract. The Church in India has as much reason to be careful about *gnānam* as had the early Church to be careful about *gnosis*. But it has also as much to lose, in self-impoverishment and in loss of missionary magnetism, by complete repudiation of knowledge. The position is somewhat similar with regard to lesser matters such as worldly possessions or social rank. At the very beginning most Christians had very little of these, and in a rightful fear of worldliness they set them at naught. But in course of time as the religion of Christ penetrated all social grades, the question of finding the proper place for wealth, neither repudiating its

rightful uses, nor falling under the mastery of its "deceitfulness," became a very practical one. There were sections of Christian society in Alexandria near the end of the second century which were in serious danger from too much luxury, from a life with scented baths and golden eating vessels. Was it possible to be a faithful, humble Christian, at the same time making a proper use of moderate wealth, and rejoicing in the best products of art and culture?

We can see the problem being solved in the person of Clement of Alexandria, the Greek scholar and gentleman and simple Christian believer. Born probably of pagan parents in Athens about the middle of the second century, he had studied Greek philosophy and saturated himself with Greek literature. He had been initiated into the Greek religious mysteries, had studied Jewish thought, and even mentions Indian hermits, Brahmans, and Buddhists. He wandered far in quest of truth, ever unsatisfied until he found peace in the religion of Christ as taught him by Pantænus. We have already seen (Chap. IV) how he rejoiced in the light shed by the Word beyond the limits of Christianity, showing its rays all derived from Christ their Sun; and how he could use the Greek myths he loved to set forth the gospel which he loved yet more. His was piety of the buoyant and gladsome type, so vital and applicable to all ages that a hymn which he wrote for children is still to be found in our hymn-books. One of his works is a complete guide to Christian manners in a complicated society sometimes vulgarly ostentatious of wealth. It goes into interesting detail as to

what a Christian should eat or drink, what kind of vessels he should use, what kind of laughter he should indulge in ("Man is not to laugh on all occasions because he is a laughing animal, any more than the horse neighs on all occasions because it is a neighing animal"); how and how much he should talk ("It is with triflers as with old shoes, all the rest is worn away by evil; only the tongue is left"); and what should be his general deportment ("Cultivate quietness in word, quietness in deed, likewise in speech and gait; and avoid impetuous eagerness"). The longest of his books is called *Stromateis*, which in India might be translated "bed-bundles," "from the haphazard way in which things came into my mind, not clarified either by arrangement or style, but mingled together in a studied disorder." It is indeed a variegated medley, a hodge-podge of thoughts from many sources, some of them far too full of Greek philosophical abstractions for our liking, but with gems of truth glittering among the mass. What is of special interest in our present connection is that Clement, in spite of the controversy with Gnosticism, is not afraid to sketch his ideal character as a Gnostic Christian, one who through faith has attained to knowledge of true wisdom. The real Christian cannot be scared of human learning. "The way of truth is one, and into it as a never-failing river flow the streams on either side." Philosophy was given to the Greeks as the Law was given to the Jews, as a preparation for Christ; so it ought to be possible to present the religion of Christ as philosophy's crown. The ideal Christian must be

a man of learning. In short, as a French writer has said, "Clement is at once the firmest of believers and the most inquisitive and independent spirit that has perhaps ever appeared in the Church."*

His spiritual inheritors in India will love the treasures of their people's past in literature, philosophy, and religion, and show them as a preparation for Christ. They will work out a detailed Christian way of living for the well-to-do as well as for the mass-movement convert, in the midst of the complications of society in modern India. They will bring to light the intellectual implications of their faith, and set forth Christ as the truth as well as the way, to the learned as well as to the ignorant. And their own walk in simple trust will all the time proclaim Him as the life.

6. *The Vakil who pleaded for Christianity.* (*Tertullian.*)

While Clement was teaching in Alexandria, a very different man was practising law in Carthage. The son of a pagan Roman centurion in North Africa, Tertullian grew up as a man of wide reading and classical culture and was trained as a lawyer, for that purpose spending some time in the study of rhetoric in Rome, where probably he lived the dissolute life of the pagan young men of the period. He despised rhetoric, but no one could surpass him in the use of it, while his studies in law left their mark on all his subsequent thought. He had probably just begun

* de Faye, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1898.

practising his profession in Carthage when on July 17th, 180, six Christians from Scili were brought up for trial, and after a proud confession of their faith were condemned to the sword. It is more than likely that the bearing of those martyrs was what first set the young lawyer's mind working upon the problem of its cause. At any rate, in the next persecution, seventeen years later, Tertullian was a Christian, "all out" for the religion of Christ, writing three brilliant books in its defence. Some five years later he probably finished the pathetic story of the death of Perpetua and of Felicitas; while fifteen years later he championed the Christian cause in an open letter to Scapula, the proconsul of the province. Think of the courage that inspired the writing of those books. Tertullian had seen Christians slowly done to death; he knew every instrument used for their torture; again and again something about the sufferings of Christians in the midst of one of his arguments can set the reader's nerves a-quiver. He knew precisely the danger he was incurring. Tertullian the lawyer's address was known to anyone who cared to serve as informer in the courts. His turn might come at any moment. But he published his writings, stayed where he was, and took all risks. And his main defence of Christianity was unanswerable. There are intolerant and unsympathetic, even ferocious passages, which we could not use to-day, but we are not likely to find ourselves to-day in his situation. What we must not miss is the glorious fearlessness that scorned compromise in a position exposed to all that was

most terrible to a sensitive nature like Tertullian's. He was always the man who made his choice, was in deadly earnest, and never compromised. That spirit in his later years attracted him to the strict sect of the Montanists, who at any rate took their religion more seriously than the average Church-member. It joined with his legal training to make him sometimes unfair to his opponents, more like a pleader concerned to score every possible point in the presentation of his case than like a seeker after truth who looks at both sides of every question. But that was the weakness of a noble concentration of moral earnestness upon some one thing which at the moment seemed right. His writings more than those of anyone else in the period take us right back into the circumstances in which they were written. He may be describing life in prison, and what the Christians made of it; or discussing whether Christians might attend the shows in the amphitheatre; or showing how impossible it was, in Tertullian's judgment, for a Christian to serve in the army. Whatever his subject, he gives the reader a sensation of having been where Tertullian was and having felt things. See, for instance, this account of the excitement at the games. "See the people coming to it already under strong emotion, already tumultuous, already passion-blind, already agitated about their bets. The praetor is too slow for them; their eyes are ever rolling, as though with the lots in his urn. Then they all hang eager on the signal; there is the united shout of a common madness. Observe how 'out of themselves' they are by their foolish

speeches. 'He has thrown it!' they exclaim, and they announce, each one to his neighbour, what all have seen."

Practical Christian ethics are his chief interest, and here as ever his conclusions are stern. Society is too tainted with idolatry for the Christian to have much contact with it. No Christian may be a soldier; no Christian may hold any public office; no Christian may take any kind of oath; no Christian may make things which are likely to be used in idol-worship; no Christian may teach literature. One gets the impression that Christians have small chance of earning a livelihood, but Tertullian cares little for that so long as they are pure of idolatrous stains. "None of them whom the Lord chose to Him said, 'I have no means to live.' Faith fears not famine." With his gift of vivid presentation goes the gift of coining terms and making phrases. Most of the technical terms of Latin theology begin with him; and some of his phrases will always live in the Christian Church.*

The blood of the martyrs is seed (*Semen est sanguis Christianorum*).

The testimony of the human soul which is naturally Christian (*Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*).

Why debate? God commands (*Quid revolvis? Deus præcipit*).

Christ our Master called Himself Truth, not Convention (*Dominus noster Christus veritatem se non consuetudinem cognominavit*).

* cf. T. R. Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, p. 321.

Faith is patience with its lamp lit (*Fides patientia in luminata*).

In the controversies in which he was engaged, and they were many, Tertullian was frequently on the side which we now know to be mistaken. But the man stands out always better than his teaching. Dr. Glover has helped us in these days to see the real Tertullian, and we must borrow his words. "By his expression of Christian ideas in the natural language of Roman thought, by his insistence on the reality of the historic Jesus and on the inevitable consequences of human conduct, by his reference of all matters of life and conduct to the will of God manifested in nature, in inspiration, and in experience, Tertullian laid Western Christendom under a great debt never very generously acknowledged. To us it may be as profitable to go behind the writings till we find the man, and to think of the manhood with every power and every endowment, sensibility, imagination, energy, flung with passionate enthusiasm on the side of purity and righteousness, of God and Truth; to think of the silent self-sacrifice freely and generously made for a despised cause, of a life-long readiness for martyrdom, of a spirit unable to compromise, unable in its love of Christ to see His work undone by cowardice, indulgence, and unfaith, and of a nature in all its fulness surrendered."*

India can do without the men who seem so broad-minded and are really so vacillating or pusillanimous that they never take a stand for any faith. But he

* T. R. Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, p. 347.

whose boldness of attitude like Tertullian's is continually saying, "Here I stand, this truth I will never forsake; you may disgrace me, make me poor, kill me, but you cannot make me conceal my faith," that man can do for Christ's cause in India service as precious as that of Tertullian for the Latin Church.

7. *The Ascetic and Theologian (Origen).*

India has always glorified asceticism, and in a Christianity which is fully indigenous there can be little doubt that room will be found for that type of Christian living which, while free from the pagan notion that the body is necessarily evil, is determined to keep the body in full subjection to the spirit. The more Christian is the asceticism the less its emphasis will fall on bodily austerities, and the more on exaltation of the intellectual and the spiritual. The Christian man who combines austerity of daily life with learning and saintliness will be a powerful magnet in India. The Church has had such men in other lands, but none greater than Origen, Clement's greater successor in Alexandria. Like most of the early Christians, he bore a heathen name, which mean's "child of Hor," the god of the river Nile. One wonders whether he was a man of half colour. His father died as a Christian martyr while Origen was still a youth. His own zeal was such that only his mother's ingenuity prevented him from going to death with his father. After the persecution he was appointed Clement's successor as head of the Catechetical School. He wanted at all costs to have time for study, so he sold his books

and costly manuscripts, and with the proceeds secured an income about equal to a coolie's daily wage, on which he lived for many years. He slept only on the floor, and for a measured number of hours, fasted much, and wore no sandals but went barefoot. In one matter excessive literalism combined with asceticism to lead him into the grave mistake of mutilating himself in supposed obedience to Matthew xix. 12, a mistake which reduced his influence in later life, but which at any rate shows his determination and recklessness of personal suffering. In the midst of days crowded with teaching and study he found time to attend lectures on Greek philosophy, and to study the sciences and also Hebrew. Biblical studies were his main interest, and he was the first Christian scholar to realize the value of recovering the exact text of Scripture. The methods which Greek scholars in Alexandria were using to correct the manuscripts of Homer he skilfully applied to the Christian sacred books, and his inspiration fired scholars for generations later to carry forward the work of pious learning which he began.

Teaching, studying, writing, preaching, he exerted an influence which gradually spread through many countries. A rich friend and pupil supplied him with shorthand writers to take down books at his dictation, which accounts for the large number of his works. Royal persons corresponded with him, and once he journeyed to Arabia to combat a new heresy. Ecclesiastical jealousy in 232 drove him from Alexandria to Cæsarea, where he taught and wrote,

and studied the topography of the Holy Land. During the persecution of Decius, in spite of his great age he was so severely tortured that after the persecution was over he died in 254. He has never been canonized, but few sons of the Church have so richly deserved the title "Saint." His combination of Christian asceticism, saintliness, and learning is one which we may well hope to see distinguishing some Indian Christian who may follow in his steps.

Conclusion.

The Christian life which was being lived in different parts of the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of our era was infinitely variegated; and these few conspicuous examples are given as half-a-dozen leaves might be shown as specimens of the trees in a vast forest. There is scope for every one of these forms of Christian living in India to-day and for many another form beside. We commonly think far too narrowly of the Christian life, and we do ourselves grave wrong when we mistake it for some dull round of Church-going and moralism. It has shown itself capable of infinite adaptability to soils Eastern and Western, and has produced flowers of human excellence as varied as the flora of many lands. And when the religious heart of India is given to Jesus Christ the Divine Guru, there will spring up in Indian lives such many-hued flowers of varied perfumes as will make a very garden of the Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY, THEN AND NOW

THE early Christians did not set out to do what we call "Social Service." Their expectation of the impending second advent and the end of the whole present order of things for long weakened their interest in the affairs of the non-Christian society around them. They felt themselves to be standing at the bedside of a dying world, so that efforts to mitigate or cure social diseases could hardly seem worth while. Yet their whole religion was intensely social, and as the years passed on its inherent nature could not fail to produce results. The conception of God as holy Father of mankind, so different from the old state-gods whose concern was only the victory or defeat of the nation which they patronized, or the gods of gain who made bargains with worshippers, or the gods of individual lust and selfishness who made men immoral, inevitably altered the conditions under which men had to live with each other. The Kingdom of God is not so much individual as social, an order of things in which the will of the holy Father effectively prevails. The distinctively Christian motive of conduct, grateful love to God who has done so much for His own, included the love of all God's children, each one of whom, however despised and sinful, is of limitless value as seen in relation to God. Here are truths

which cannot fail to produce a new social order whenever they find a lodgment in the minds of men. East or West, the whole structure of human life begins to change when every individual on the earth is seen to have an infinite value as the child of a heavenly Father whose character was revealed in the human life of Jesus.

Consequently, in spite of the second advent expectation, we find the New Testament Epistles full of statements of principles on which a better social order must be founded. Husbands, wives, children, slaves, freemen, rich, poor, those who can show hospitality, those who are unfairly treated—all kinds of people are told how to live together, and the principles laid down are those upon which the best kind of human society has yet to be built up. In times like the present, when alike in India and all over the world the old order is failing to satisfy, those principles call for re-examination, that they may be applied to present-day conditions.

In the light of that great need let us consider some of the social results of the Christian religion in the early centuries. We can most conveniently do this under a few definite headings.

1. The Christian Religion and Poverty.

No one can despise or neglect the poor man who realizes his infinite value in the sight of God; and nothing is clearer than the respect and solicitude shown for the poor by the early Christians. It revolutionized their whole idea of property. A man's possessions were not absolutely his, but held

in trust for all who were in need. Persons mattered more than property, and the rights of any individual to that which belonged to him were limited by the general welfare of the whole community. Every owner would have to give to God an account of how far he had fulfilled his stewardship for the good of all. Some references in Acts, taken apart from others which interpret them, have been supposed to mean that the first Christian Church instituted a compulsory communism; but this is pure mistake. There was no abolition of private property, but there was insistence upon the duty of sharing with those in need. When that sharing went to the point of making large sacrifices of private property, as in the case of Barnabas, such conduct was highly praised. But the essential principle was that every Christian should regard himself as a trustee rather than an absolute owner of whatever he possessed.

Moreover the early Christians keenly felt the danger to the individual of great worldly wealth. Not only in the Epistle of James, but in such later works as Clement of Alexandria's *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* the perils of opulence are clearly set forth, though Clement is careful to assure the rich man that it is not impossible for him to win the prize of Christian life. The characteristic attitude is indicated in a passage from *The Preaching of Peter*, written in the first half of the second century, and repeatedly quoted in the third and fourth centuries.

"Understand then, ye rich, that ye are in duty bound to do service, having received more than ye

yourselves need. Learn that to others is lacking that wherein you superabound. Be ashamed of holding fast what belongs to others. Imitate God's equity, and none shall be poor." Church leaders indignantly denounced the lending of money to poor borrowers at high rates of interest which held the borrower in the lender's power, "Farming not the land but the necessity of the needy."*

How thoroughly the Church acted upon these principles is seen in the single fact that in the middle of the third century the Roman Church was actually supporting 1,500 widows and poor persons. There were cases where in times of emergency bishops sold the sacred vessels and ornaments of Churches to help the unfortunate. The whole institution of the order of "widows," as a kind of subordinate clergy, was a means of both caring for the widows themselves and providing for the needs of the sick and the poor whom they visited. If Christians were sent to prison for their faith, the Church undertook to provide for their needs. Even when they were sent to work in mines at a distance, deacons went to their assistance. Brethren who died in poverty were buried out of the common fund of the Church.

With all this benevolence, the danger of pauperization was not overlooked. Alms were for those who could not work; for those who could, employment must be found. The rule, as expressed in the third century *Epistle of Clement to James*, was "To the workman work: to him who cannot work, mercy" (i.e. alms).

* Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* XVI, 18.

Nor was almsgiving restricted to needy Christians. Non-Christians shared in its benefits, and were deeply impressed by it, as is evidenced by the proclamation in which the Emperor Julian, in his hatred of Christianity, paid it the compliment of imitation, bidding the pagan priests bestir themselves on behalf of the poor. "It would be shameful when the Jews have not a beggar, when the impious Galileans nourish both ours and theirs, that those of our cult should be deprived of the succour which we ought to give them." One fine example of Christian generosity to non-Christians is the case of the Bishop of Amida, who in 420 sold the consecrated vessels of his Church in order to ransom and send back in freedom to their own country 7,000 Persians who had been captured by the Roman army.*

In modern India the Church has to face a two-fold economic problem of very great difficulty. First, although in India, as in the ancient Church, there are a few Christians of wealth and position, the condition of the outcastes from whom the Christian Church has so largely been recruited has produced an average economic condition of Church members probably lower than that of Christians anywhere else in the world. And second, the economic conditions of life in India generally cause hardships for vast numbers of people outside the Church which Christians surely must try to mitigate. For both sides of the problem the only possibility of solution lies in faithful adherence to the fundamental social ideals which conquered poverty in the early Christian

* Schmidt, *Social Results of Early Christianity*, p. 264.

Church, the ideal of the inestimable worth of each individual in God's sight, and of the trusteeship of all property for the good of all.

Some things have already been accomplished. The achievements of Christianity for the economic as well as the moral betterment of the depressed classes are admitted on all hands as not only remarkable, but new in the history of India. While most of the agencies employed have been set on foot by foreign missions, by far the largest amount of the actual work involved has been done by members of the Indian Christian Church; and no small part of the achievements must be set down to the credit of that Church. Nevertheless what has hitherto been accomplished is chiefly valuable as an indication of the magnitude and beneficence of the results which will follow when the Church at large makes war on poverty as it once did long ago. The fear of perpetuating a spirit of dependence, by giving too generous help, may be justified as long as the help continues to come from Churches in other lands; but it is quite a needless fear when the Church in India helps its own poor. Every form of charitable practice in the life of the early Church could find scope for its exercise in meeting the deep need of Christians in India. And beyond the Christian Church, millions of people find life scarcely tolerable through insufficiency of food. Economists tell us that India would have supplies enough for all her population if they were distributed with anything approaching equality. Here is a call for the proclamation of the Christian doctrine of the trusteeship

of all property, and of the limitless value of the life of even the neediest person on the earth.

2. *The Christian Religion and Public Distress.*

Probably no country in the world suffers quite so frequently as India, or on so large a scale, from sweeping visitations of famine, or from plague, cholera, and similar epidemic diseases. The ravages of the influenza epidemic in 1918, when according to official estimates India lost six million people in a few weeks, are stated by competent officers to be without parallel in the modern history of disease.

In most cases Christians have borne themselves well in such times of crisis. Particularly in the relief of famine, it has become an understood thing that Christian organizations can be relied upon to do what they can in the relief of distress, not only amongst Christians but amongst the general public. And yet it can hardly be said that the Christian Church has yet realized that such crises are not mere calamities, but opportunities for the demonstration to the world of the essential spirit of the religion of Christ, the spirit that cares for all sufferers, and seeks to serve and save them regardless of risk to itself. The time should come when such a visitation at once starts the Church mobilizing all her resources in a campaign against whatever threatens human life and happiness. There will be no limitation of the available help to members of the Christian community. Human need will constitute sufficient claim upon the help which Christian love can offer.

In the light of these considerations we have a

special interest in the records of how the Christians of the early Church conducted themselves in similar circumstances. From time to time the Roman Empire was swept by plague, with terrible loss of life, especially in the middle of the third century and at the beginning of the fourth. In Alexandria on the former occasion we have a description of the activities of the Christians amid scenes of death and terror, written by their bishop Dionysius; it is not the only piece of evidence of the kind.

“Indeed, the most of our brethren, by their exceeding great love and brotherly affection, not sparing themselves, held fast to each other, visited the sick without fear, ministered to them assiduously, and served them for the sake of Christ. Right gladly did they perish with them. . . . Indeed many did die after caring for the sick and giving health to others, as it were transplanting the death of others into themselves. In this way the noblest of our brethren died, including some presbyters and deacons and people of the highest reputation. . . . Quite the reverse was it with the heathen. They abandoned those who began to sicken, fled from their dearest friends, threw out the sick when half dead into the streets, and let the dead lie unburied.”*

3. *The Christian^s Religion and Slavery.*

The worst feature of the civilization surrounding the early Christian Church was that it was built up upon slavery, a slavery so complete that it poisoned

* Eusebius, Bk. VII, Chap. xxii.

the life of the masters as well as of the slaves. Christians seem to have given no thought to the institution of slavery as such, beyond attributing it to the Fall of man. The Church had too many other pre-occupations, and without attacking slavery was already sufficiently suspected of hatred of the existing order. But the principle of the value of each soul in relation to the Fatherhood of God could not fail to modify the working of the institution, and at long last to abolish it altogether. It gave to the slave a new dignity, so that his slavery was no bar to his holding office, or receiving the fullest reverence, in the Christian Church. We know of one bishop in Rome, Callistus, and possibly another, Hermas' brother Pius, who had been slaves. Said Lactantius, "Slaves are not slaves to us; we deem and term them brothers after the spirit, and fellow servants in religion" (Instit. V. 16).

Some of the martyrs whose sufferings most deeply stirred the whole Church were slaves, but that made no difference to the glory ascribed to them. In the most pathetic of all the martyr stories, mistress and slave woman faced death hand in hand in the absolute equality of sisters. At that level of Christian experience the profoundest gulf of social division had ceased to exist.

India has other social divisions than those between slave and freeman, divisions which must be bridged before the best hopes of her children can be realized. Programmes of social reform abound which plan for the abolition of caste, for co-operation between all communities, for the elimination of race prejudice

and the promotion of more cordial intercourse between the East and the West. The history of the early days of Christianity in its linking together of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, suggests that it has a mighty contribution to make to the new life of India. Thoughts of the one God and Father of all mankind, of the best of all humanity summed up in the one Son of Man, of the one Kingdom of God as the divine social order transcending all boundaries of class and race, and of the equal divine love bestowed upon every individual whatever his human status—such thoughts as these can do more to achieve real unity than all the schemes of reform ever promulgated. The Christian religion has already shown itself to be the most powerful solvent of caste and race prejudice yet discovered in India. The highest offices of the Church are as open to those who once were outcastes as long ago they were open to slaves. A Christianity which is true to type cannot fail to deal with caste and race divisions in India as effectually as once it dealt with slavery in the Roman Empire.

4. *The Status of Woman.*

In the ancient Roman Republic women were in a position in many respects similar to that of most Indian women to-day. They were married at about the age of twelve, regarded as inferiors, and kept in life-long submission, first to fathers, then to husbands, finally to sons; and Roman law gave them very few rights at all. Under the Empire all this was relaxed, but not on the ground of any constructive

principles regarding womanhood or marriage. The result was a terrible increase in divorce and immorality. Women were emancipated, but enslaved to their own caprice or passion. Utterly different was the position of woman in the Christian Church. It is true that some of the Church Fathers, with their celibate prejudice, said strong things of woman's weakness and vanity. But these are more than counterbalanced by such a saying as this of Augustine, "The Saviour gives abundant proof of the dignity of woman in being born of a woman," or this of Chrysostom, "They surpass us in love to the Saviour, in chastity, in compassion for the miserable." And it is the undoubted fact that women in the Church were educated as carefully as men.

Whether we look at the services which women rendered in the Christian Church, at the long lists of women martyrs, or at the treatment of the married life in early Christian books, we cannot fail to receive the impression that, whatever might be the social customs still persisting in the different countries into which the religion penetrated—customs which as yet made it impossible for women to perform public functions in the Church—nevertheless woman as a spiritual being was the absolute equal of man, as fellow-heir with him of the grace of life. India tells the same story over again. In a country where child-marriage and the *purdah* system have prevailed for ages past, the Christian women are treated as the equals of the Christian men, receive equal education, are married at a reasonable age, and have equal vote with men in the affairs of the Church. The

Christian community is being continually flooded by illiterate outcastes; yet, if we exclude the small and select community of Parsees, in literacy the Christian women head all other groups of women in India. In Bengal, which has a population not far short of that of Great Britain, there were in 1918 only 156 women in all the training institutions for women teachers at every grade, and 92 of these were Indian Christians. Such facts as these are symptomatic of the special genius of the Christian religion for the elevation of womanhood in every society. "As a life-bringer alone has woman her place in the scheme of Hindu philosophy—and woman never did have a Vedic value."* That is why Hindu women to-day, in spite of their wonderful spiritual capacities, are mainly uneducated and still oppressed by evil customs. In Christ there is neither male nor female, but one new divine humanity. That is why Christian women inevitably come to their own. Practically every programme of social reform in India puts the education and elevation of women as the first plank in its platform. But a social order is built upon spiritual ideas. Great progress will not be made with educational schemes until new ideas of woman's essential nature and value have been spread abroad. And here the social reformer will find no ally so strong as the Christian religion.

5. *The Christian Religion and Family Life.*

The Christian view of womanhood inevitably came as a purifying influence into the life of the family.

* Cornelia Sorabji, *Between the Twilights*.

The weakest point in the whole social order of the world in which the early Church grew up was the corruption of family life. Old theories surviving from the days of the republic made the head of the family an absolute despot, with powers of life and death over his own children. If his despotism was cruel or immoral there was no remedy, and the presence of slaves in the house encouraged him in both cruelty and immorality. Childhood had no claims to protection, and the father could choose entirely whether he would bring up the child born to him or expose it. The noble philosopher Seneca defended the killing of weak and deformed infants. The slave in the house had no rights against his master. Even his marriage had no legal form, and his wife was referred to as his "companion," while the children belonged to his owner.

Conditions like these made real home-life impossible. Children were largely left to the care of slaves, while their parents were pursuing profligate amusement. Men and women alike lost self-respect and mutual reverence, else the amphitheatre shows of those days could not have been tolerated.

Amid surroundings like these the Christian principle of the sanctity of each individual life through its direct relationship to the holy Father, and the Christian motive of all-compelling, grateful love, brought into existence without conscious intention a family life that was unknown to the rest of the world. There was no attempt made to reconstruct family systems, but the despotism of the head of the

family was limited by love and purity; the married relation had new sanctions and purer ideals; children were the Lord's gift, to be brought up in the love and fear of Him: slaves were men for whom Christ died. The result could not fail to be impressive. Not that family life became instantaneously perfect. The glimpses of it which we get in literature show that it was not entirely free from the surrounding social evils, or sometimes from the old Roman sternness. But the Christian home had become a school of moral discipline, and a scene of happy spiritual fellowship, such as existed nowhere else.

Fortunately for India, there is no such general widespread corruption of family life to form the background of the expansion of Christianity. The life of the average Hindu family is morally on a far higher level than the life of the average pagan of the Roman Empire of the second and third centuries A.D. Nevertheless Christian family life has a great part to play in the conversion of India to Christ, because the Hindu home is necessarily weak at certain points where the Christian home is strong. The joint family system is not incompatible with Christian living, but as practised in the Hindu family its tendency is so far to merge the life of husband and wife in the life of the larger patriarchal family to which the husband belongs, that something is missing of that joyful intimacy which grows up in the house where mother, father, and children make a home all to themselves. Still more unfortunate from the point of view of home life is the terrible disparity in education between husband and wife,

making impossible any real community of ideas or spiritual comradeship. When the schoolboy ten years old cannot help being aware that he knows far more than his mother, it is difficult for him to maintain that respect which is an element in the best filial love. Worst of all, if the theory of family life is that it is a stage through which the complete man must necessarily pass, but which he will leave behind him in complete detachment and oblivion as he climbs beyond it to the higher places of experience, then domestic love and affection are no longer symbols and sacraments of love divine, and the truest sanctity of family life is gone. The difference between the spirit of Hinduism and that of Christianity will be felt nowhere more strongly than in matters connected with home life.

There are even now some homes in India where husbands and wives are comrades, who can talk together of all life's problems on equal terms; where children have no fear of their parents, yet hold them in loving respect; where earthly parenthood of both mother and father makes no mean symbol of the divine fatherhood; and where daily family prayer links each day's events to the eternal throne of God. Every such home interprets to the world something of the relationships which ought to obtain in the larger family of the divine Father; every such home radiates healing influences throughout the whole social order. That was a beautiful word of Clement of Alexandria: "Who are the two or three gathering in the name of Christ among whom the Lord is in the midst? Does he not mean man, wife, and child by

the three, seeing woman is made to match man by God? ” *

6. *Christianity and Public Legislation.*

Christianity came too late to save the Roman Empire from dissolution. During the most critical years it was a proscribed religion, only able to exert a very indirect influence upon political authorities. By the time that Christian Emperors had come into power, able to publish decrees which would affect the life of the entire population, the forces of disintegration which left the Empire at the mercy of the Goths had gained control. The opportunity did not come, nor has it come yet, for the foundation of a completely Christian State, whose laws are consistent expressions of the Christian principles. But the religion of Christ was working as a powerful leaven, and latterly, even in non-Christian circles.

At length, in A.D. 313, Christianity obtained by the Edict of Toleration a new position in the Empire, and an influence over public enactments which it had never enjoyed before. Constantine was no perfect Christian, but before all things a statesman; yet in his legislation there is an entirely new recognition of human equality, and a strong purpose to protect the weak and oppressed. In the long series of his legislative acts, he provided for such things as the encouragement of the emancipation of slaves, the abolition of the punishment of crucifixion and of the branding of criminals on the face, the discouragement of the exposure of infants,

* *Stromateis* III. 68, 1, quoted by Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, p. 303.

the prohibition of cruel and licentious rites, and the prohibition of gladiatorial games—though such was the popular passion for them that it could not be made effective until about a century later, after the monk Telemachus had sacrificed his life by a protest in the arena. He made laws prohibiting unjust detention of prisoners, laws giving to mothers rights of guardianship over their own children, laws against immorality and easy divorce, and laws against oppression by rich persons and tax gatherers. The world cannot be altogether changed by improved laws, and it is probable that a good deal of Constantine's new regulations was impossible to enforce. But they reveal a new conception of the purpose of government as being the defence of the weak and oppressed and the promotion of public morality. Constantine was followed by other Christian Emperors down to the time of Theodosius I, under whom was made between 429 and 438 a compilation of the laws of Christian Emperors, only a few years before the fall of the Empire. Their work shows a blending of pagan and Christian influences, reflecting the mingled public opinion of the time; but the respect for womanhood, the considerateness towards the oppressed, and the desire for equal justice between man and man which characterize them are new and wholly beneficent elements in Roman legislation. They are surely an illustration of the kind of leavening influence which the Christian religion brings into the business of law-making in every country.

One aspect of the relation of Christianity to political matters is of special interest in these days,

when decisive steps are being taken towards the ultimate establishment of popular forms of government in India. True democracy is the expression in the political sphere of the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity for all men. Even a hasty reading of the history of the beginnings of Christianity is sufficient to show that the whole Church was a brotherhood whose mutual love impressed even the enemies of Christianity. The equality of men in the sight of God was an inevitable consequence of belief in the divine Fatherhood, and expressed itself, as we have already seen, in the Church's attitude to social cleavages and towards the poor and the slaves. As for liberty, although the abstract conception of full liberty of conscience had not yet dawned upon the generality of men, still the whole Christian readiness to suffer persecution for conscience sake was the most powerful defence of the principle which could have been devised. For, as a Christian apologist, Tertullian, wrote, "It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that any and every man should worship what he thinks right." In a time of political despotism, the Christian religion was sowing broadcast the seeds of true democracy. Democracy is only real in the degree in which all members of a state genuinely believe in freedom, equality, and brotherhood. Christianity has flourished under every type of political government; but it has a very special function to fulfil in any country which is preparing for democracy.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEBATED PRACTICAL QUESTIONS.

I. *Names of Christians.*

SHOULD a convert change his name at baptism? Ought a name to be in itself a proclamation of the religion to which a man belongs? Is there any danger lest a name which has non-Christian associations should exert an indefinitely non-Christian influence? These are questions of great practical importance, which have been much debated in India. This is not the place for a discussion of the whole problem; but this happens to be one of the subjects upon which ancient Christian precedents have great suggestiveness and may fitly here be cited.

(a) A mere glance at the names of the persons to whom St. Paul is sending greetings in Rom. xvi. 3-16 makes it perfectly clear that at any rate the first generation of Christians saw no need to change their names, even when they involved the names of heathen gods. The New Testament at large seems to show that at first the Christians no more thought it necessary to change their names than to change their dress. We might have expected that even if the first generation of Christians saw no need to change their own names upon conversion, they would have taken care to give Christian names to their children. But the evidence of inscriptions

proves that they did nothing of the kind. Further, if anyone could be expected to wear some exclusively Christian title, it would be the bishop. But in the first list of bishops which we happen to possess, that of the North African synod in A.D. 256, out of eighty-seven names, only two are Christian (Peter and Paul); the rest are ordinary pagan names, many of them actually those of pagan gods. This was in the West; but all the evidence goes to show that the same was true of the East. It is a striking fact that "the martyrs perished because they declined to sacrifice to the gods whose names they bore."

This can hardly have happened entirely without reflection. In fact we have proof that in a few exceptional cases Christians felt uneasy about their pagan names. Five Egyptians martyred at Cæsarea in 310 gave to the magistrate not their own Egyptian names, but the names of Old Testament prophets. But the way Eusebius tells the story shows that this was entirely an unusual case. No discussions of this matter in the early centuries have been preserved to us, but the practice of the whole Church is clear. Even after the Christian religion had overcome the Roman Empire, Christians continued to give their children non-Christian names. Naturally in course of time, at any rate by the beginning of the third century, some parents began to like to call their children after Peter and Paul; but very curiously these seem for a long time to be the only New Testament names given to Christians. Any other distinctively Christian names which came into occasional use were taken from the Old Testament until

well into the fourth century. When the practice of taking the name of some great Christian saint did ultimately, in the fourth century, spread in wider circles, it seems to have been not entirely free from the superstitious idea of thus securing help and patronage from the saint whose name was adopted. One writer in the fifth century definitely says that such names put their bearers under the protection of patron saints.* This was a characteristically pagan idea, simply taken over into Christianity. We thus reach the surprising conclusion that, as Harnack says, "In the days when Christians bore pagan names and nothing more, the dividing line between Christianity and the world was drawn much more sharply than in the days when they began to call themselves Peter and Paul. As is so often the case, the forms made their appearance just when the spirit was undermined."†

The choice, however, did not lie entirely between the names of heathen gods and the names of saints. There were names from geography and agriculture, from jewels and colours, rivers and months, from the wish for good luck, and so on. Naturally Christians preferred some names to others, but none were taboo. A sentence of Tertullian's suggests that the only serious objection which could be felt against a name was its ugliness, or ill-omened sound, or its insulting or unseemly connotation. Any other sort of name would serve for the Christian as well as for the pagan, and there are many instances of Chris-

* Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *de Græcarum Affectionum Curationibus*, Sermo VIII. † *Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 37.

tians bearing the names of pagan deities right down to the sixth century.

All this seems to give clear guidance to Christians in India. It has to be remembered that in these days of national feeling there is a special objection to names or forms which are *unnecessarily* foreign to India. Church History plainly suggests that it is unnecessary to Christian loyalty to wear a Bible name. Christian loyalty is a spirit which can manifest itself in life much better than in a name. The best Christians of the early centuries wore heathen names without any undesirable consequences resulting therefrom. At the same time, many of the names of outcastes now being baptized are, in Tertullian's language, "barbarous or ill-omened, or containing some insult or impropriety." Such names must be changed, but not into Bible names or names of foreign missionaries, like Methuselah or Jones. All the names of virtues, colours, jewels, numbers, rivers, months, the geographical and agricultural names which early Christians used in Greek or Latin and which already exist in Sanskrit or vernacular, are available, and for the sake of the naturalizing of Christianity in India should be suggested to the convert whose old name was objectionable. For the rest no change at all is necessary.

2. *Mixed Marriages.*

There are not a few indications that in the early Christian community the women outnumbered the men, especially in the upper ranks of society, and that this gave rise to serious practical difficulties,

especially in the resultant tendency of Christian women to marry pagans. In the very first days we find St. Paul advising husbands and wives married to unbelievers not to leave their partners (1 Cor. vii. 12-14). But to anyone who contemplated marriage with a non-Christian he said sharply, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi. 14). For a century and a half after St. Paul we hear nothing of such marriages, and it is probable that they did not occur. But by the end of the second century it appears that they had become fairly common. Tertullian wrote a whole book exhorting his wife not to marry a pagan in case he died, and expressly said that such marriages were taking place. His discussion of the subject throws much light upon the ordinary life of a Christian woman in Carthage, and upon the habits and customs of the average pagan husband, thereby bringing home to the mind the continual vexation of soul which must have been the portion of any Christian woman married to a pagan, and which in some cases must have amounted to continual martyrdom. We see the Christian woman anxious to keep a fast, and compelled that day to partake of a convivial feast, in an atmosphere of idolatry. She wishes to visit poorer brethren, to attend the Lord's Supper (which pagans believe licentious), to attend occasional night meetings, on Easter Eve to be all night long away from home. How can the pagan husband prevent himself from feeling suspicious of such practices? She sometimes does things even more open to suspicion, creeping into prison to kiss a martyr's

bonds, even exchanging the "kiss of peace" with Christian brethren. She is noticed saving up some of her own food to give to her fellow-believers. She makes the sign of the cross over her bed or her body, or even by night rises to pray. Before she takes any food she secretly tastes holy bread she has reserved from the sacrament (according to local usage at the time). These things must look to the husband like dangerous magic. She has to do her Christian duties under a watchful and unsympathetic eye, often by her very zeal adding to the circumstantial evidence which seems so strong against her.*

That such a marriage involved much suffering and temptation was clear to all. What was not so clear was whether it was an offence against religion, to be visited with the severest discipline of the Church. Tertullian felt no doubt whatever that such a union was to be treated as on a par with fornication, to be punished by excommunication from the Christian brotherhood. He was deeply pained that some Christian brother had said that marriage with a pagan was only a trivial offence.†

Bishop Cyprian of Carthage took up entirely the same attitude, and ruled that no marriage tie was to be formed with pagans. Later on the Council of Elvira in Spain in 305 passed noteworthy rules. "Because Christian maidens are very numerous, they are by no means to be married off to pagans, lest their youthful prime presume and relax into an adultery of the soul." "Neither Jews nor heretics

* See Tertullian, *To his Wife*, Book II, ch. 4-6.

† *To his Wife*, Book II, ch. 3.

are to be allowed to marry Catholic girls, since there can be no fellowship between a believer and an unbeliever. Any parents who disobey this interdict shall be excluded from the Church for five years." "Should any parents have married their daughters to heathen priests, it is resolved that they shall never be granted communion." Yet so severe a view was not held in all places alike, for at the later Synod of Arles in Gaul it is only laid down that Christian maidens who have married pagans "shall be excluded from communion for a certain period."

Consequently in this problem, which in some parts of India, but especially in North Ceylon, is causing much perplexity, the history of the Church does not give such clear guidance as in the matter of Christian names. Yet it clearly pronounces that in some way or other parents responsible for bringing about mixed marriages should be disciplined by the Church. The severity of the discipline to be inflicted must be estimated by the educated Christian conscience of the Church to-day, but certainly the practice itself needs to be very strongly opposed. A marriage union in spirit as well as in body is impossible where husband and wife are separated by fundamental views of life, and any other union is alike a degradation of marriage and a fruitful source of unhappiness. All the spiritual resources of the Church should be used to prevent it.

3. *Church Buildings.*

For a very long time the Christian Church had no public buildings for its worship. Doubtless in some

areas earlier than in others it was felt to be necessary to erect special buildings for worship only; but the statement is broadly true that for the first hundred and fifty years of its existence, that is to say throughout the first great period of expansion, the Christian Church managed without special buildings for its purposes. The fact is surely worth pondering. When we consider how high a percentage of the total work and giving of most of our modern Churches is devoted to the erection and maintenance of special ecclesiastical buildings, we can hardly help wondering if there has come about a change in our conception of the relative urgency of the needs which a Church ought to attempt to supply.

In the normal Church of the fourth century the bishop's chair was placed behind the Lord's Table at the end of the Church, with benches on each side for the presbyters. The communicant members of the Church were in the middle part of the building, or nave, the sexes separate. Further back was the *narthex*, a kind of vestibule, occupied by the catechumens, the penitents under discipline, and any unbelievers who chose to attend. All these occupants of the *narthex* had to withdraw before the communion service was celebrated. The building was in shape not unlike the Roman basilica, or hall of justice and business in large cities.

The scanty information available concerning the buildings of the early Church suggests to us, on the one hand, that a special building is not essential to a Church, and should not be regarded as the indispensable focus of all its activities; on the other, that

there is no one authoritative form which Church buildings must adopt. The Church in India is under no obligation to imitate the style of architecture developed under totally different conditions in Europe. The Christians of India have yet to discover the form of building in which they can best worship God, and there is both room and need for experimentation. Some will want four simple walls, sufficient roof to give protection from sun and rain, but only the dome of sky overhead as the finest symbol of God's presence. Others will wish to hallow with all the associations of a shrine that portion of their building where sacred symbols stand and the Communion service takes place. Some will find a place for Christian gōpuras, while others will build prayer-halls with Moorish arches, where a Moham-medan can feel at home. Some will erect a building whose whole form is shaped by the conception of the Eucharist as the focus of the Church's life, while others will build with the supreme purpose of the proclamation of the word of the Gospel. Let them but think out their needs, free from the necessity of imitation of the models of other countries, and then build simply and sincerely; and the day will come when Christian buildings in India will play as great a part in the interpretation of religion as was played by the cathedrals of Europe in the Middle Ages.

4. *The importance of terms.*

It is often assumed that names are of so little importance that it matters little if Christianity in India borrows extensively from the religious terms

which have been in use among Hindus for many centuries. As a mere necessity of translation it is evident that terms have to be borrowed, but the history of the early Church suggests that they must be chosen with extreme care and their connotation carefully guarded; else they are liable to carry with them an atmosphere quite foreign to that which they are intended to convey. There are cases in which the average man's conception of the meaning of a religious act has been profoundly affected by the name which has been casually associated with that act in the public mind.

One conspicuous case is that of the Eucharist itself. From early days, when the Eucharist and the love-feast were connected, it was the custom of the Christians to bring offerings in kind, especially bread and wine, for the love-feast. It was not unnatural that the same Greek term should be used for these gifts as was used to denote temple offerings, especially as it signified merely "things brought forward or presented." The term was felt to be specially appropriate in the case of that part of the offerings which was actually used for the celebration of the Eucharist. Hence it came about that at least as early as Irenæus, i.e. about A.D. 175, we find the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper conceived as first-fruit offerings from God's created gifts, presented in prayer, as the Christian thank-offering (*Eucharistia*) in contrast with Gentile sacrifices. Apparently no one noticed any real change when the Church's "gifts" to God's service (1 Clem. xliv. 3), to be used in commemoration of Christ's

self-oblation and for brotherly communion, came to be spoken of as sacrificial oblations (*prosphora*). Ultimately, however, the term came by association to be applied to the elements (after consecration) with the idea that somehow or other Christ Himself, sacrificially offered for us, was in the *prosphora*, the "offerings" of self-oblation which men offered at and in the Eucharist. And in the long run that meaning eclipsed all others in the Catholic Church, though it has no warrant in strictly primitive Christian usage (e.g. Rom. xii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 5; Heb. xiii. 15f.; cf. Phil. iv. 18).

Less conspicuous is the case of the terms borrowed from the Greek mysteries to denote matters connected with Christian worship, such as "seal" or "mystery" for baptism, the description of the baptized as "initiates," as well as various Levitical and hierarchical terms used of the Church's ministry. In the pseudo-Dionysius (about A.D. 500) every Christian ordinance is described in terms strictly applicable only to the Greek mysteries. This is not the place for a discussion of the extent to which the Christian worship was affected by contact with the Greek mysteries. But it is certain that, about the same time as these terms became popularized among Christians, there grew up among them a fashion of secrecy about the special sacred forms and formulas of Christian faith and worship, which was referred to as the "discipline of secrecy," and which had an unfortunate influence upon the conception of Christianity among those who were outside, if not among Christians themselves. There is little evidence for

anything of this kind before the end of the second century, and it is fairly clear that it slipped into the Christian Church on the analogy of pagan "mystery" usage.

A similar thing might easily happen in India, if no one were on the watch against it, since the tendency to form esoteric circles of initiates has always been strong in Hindu sects. Any maintenance of secrecy is opposed to the whole spirit of Christianity, as of Judaism before it.

But perhaps the most serious example of change is one where the same term gradually changed its meaning, namely the term "faith." It is not open to question that in the first days of the Church "faith" meant personal trust in Jesus Christ, a vital and experimental surrender of the self in loyalty to and reliance upon the Lord. But by the fourth century the word had come to denote acceptance of a number of credal statements, in some of which there was as much Greek philosophy as there was personal religion. Those credal statements were noble and necessary efforts to state Christian truth to the fourth century; and in making them it was no more possible for the Church to eliminate Greek philosophical thought than it would be for us to state Christian truth to our own generation while eliminating modern secular knowledge. But acquiescence in those statements was a different thing from the personal entrusting of the self to a divine Lord, and could even exist without it. And since faith is central to and determinative of the whole Christian religion, it meant that something not dis-

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tinctively Christian had obtained a controlling influence over the religion, because the Church as a whole failed to notice that the meaning of a term had changed.

The Church in India has chosen various vernacular terms to translate "faith" (Greek, *pistis*), and is gradually imparting to them her own special atmosphere and connotation. But the history of the past suggests that there is no term which needs to be more carefully guarded than this against a change in significance which would slowly alter the whole character of the religion.

5. *Naturalizing Christianity in India.*

It was said in the Preface that the religion of Christ is a seed, cast into the soil of the world. Both soil and seed help to determine the form of the life of any plant; and this is equally true of religion. Without changing its essential life or breaking its continuity with the Church of all lands and all ages, Indian Christianity will find new expressions of the life in Christ. That it should do so is almost the supreme need of the present hour. The worst criticism which can be levelled against the Church in India to-day is that its movements of life are so seldom spontaneous, and so often galvanized from without, with the result that the forms which they create have an inevitably foreign appearance. Large numbers of Indian people are refusing to give any serious examination to the claims of Christ because they are repelled at the outset by this unnecessary foreignness in the outward appearance of the Christian religion.

What is the remedy? Most certainly not any attempt to modify Christianity with a view to making it more popular. That would be an unfaithfulness whose results would be fatal.

Nor is it likely that much success will attend the efforts of any but Indian Christians themselves at what may be called the Indianization of Christianity, though foreign missionaries can give useful help by refusing to impose on India the whole paraphernalia of their Western Church organization, and by securing a clear course for Indian Christians who wish to try their own methods. There is no quick remedy, but only the way of growth. We are still at the seed-sowing stage, and the main business is the sowing of good seed. We said above that the finding of Indian expressions for the life in Christ is almost the supreme need of the hour. Almost, but not quite. The supreme need is still the faithful portrayal of Christ Himself, and the communication of the spirit which He imparts. Our main business, then, is the proclamation of the good news of Christ, evidenced by the power of a life which is obviously inspired by Him. The magnetism of that gospel and that life must ultimately draw the men of India with such power and in such numbers as to create an atmosphere which is as Indian as it is truly Christian, and in which indigenous manifestations of religious vitality will spontaneously arise. Then will come the testing time, which will show whether we care more for life or for familiar forms, and whether we truly hold that the living Spirit of Christ guides every race of believers into truth.

Until then the business of every Christian who loves India is to look to Christ for Himself, and so to exalt Him by the testimony of life and lip that throughout all the future, whatever changes may come in the days which lie hidden with God, Christ and He alone will be the living centre of the religion of those who name His name in India. In Him alone will they truly find God; by His sole grace will they receive real salvation.

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